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—Editor

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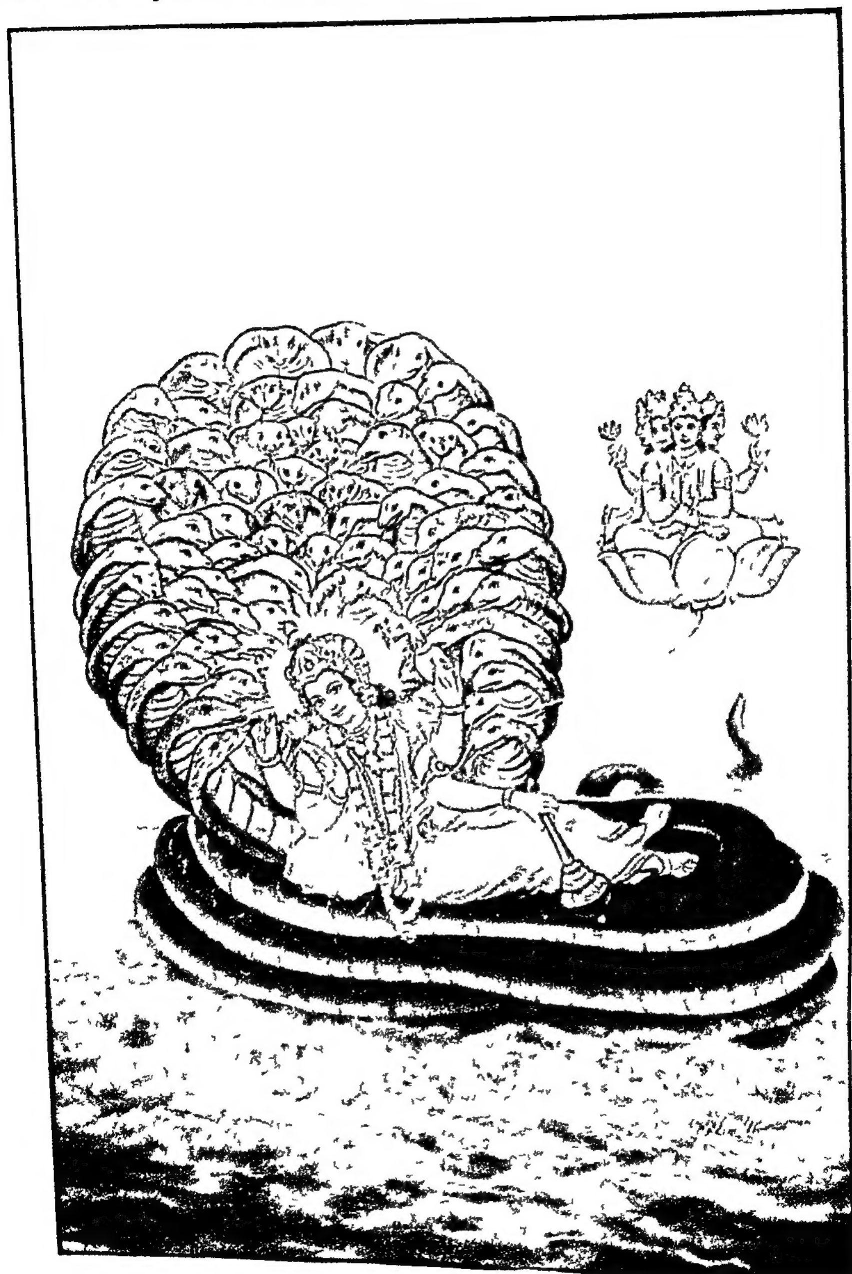
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ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात्पूर्णमुदच्यते। पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते॥



The KALYANA-KALPATARU

OR
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शान्ताकारं भुजगशयनं पद्मनाभं सुरेशं
विश्वाधारं गगनसदृशं मेघवर्णं शुभाङ्गम्।
लक्ष्मीकान्तं कमलनयनं योगिभिर्ध्यानगम्यं
वन्दे विष्णुं भवभयहरं सर्वलोकैकनाथम्॥

I adore Lord Visnu, the only ruler of all the worlds and dispeller of the fear of worldly existence, who has a tranquil appearance sleeping on the bed of serpent (Śesa Nāga) and endowed with lotus in His navel, the master of gods, the substratum of entire universe, resembling the sky and having cloud-like hue, who has beautiful limbs, the beloved of Laksmī, the lotus eyed one, who is known by yogīs in their meditation

The entire Universe is pervaded by Viṣṇu

—His Holiness Jagadguru Sri Shankaracharya

Kamkoti Peeth, Kancheepuram

The most revered Śrī Ādya Śankara has recognized the existence of six sects namely (1) The Śaiva (2) The Vaisnava (3) The Śākta (4) The Gāṇapatya (5) The Kaumāra and (6) The Saura The most prominent among these are two—the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava

The doctrine according to which Śrī Śiva is regarded as the greatest deity and the other deities as His subordinate and the method of knowing the supreme object and the realities in that light is termed as 'Śaiva' and the doctrine according to which Śrī Visnu is regarded as the Supreme deity and the Supreme Being and subordinating all others to Him and the interpretation of the supreme object and the realities by that method is known as 'Vaiṣṇava'

Now the question arises as to who is 'Śiva' and who is Lord Visnu.

Śrī Śiva is Daksināmūrti having ugly aspects such as uneven number of eyes, the snake, the skin (of tiger) as cloth and the ornaments as well—having the complexion like that of pure Sphaṭika (a valuable transparent white stone) assuming the image of one prone to dance (Natarāja as He is called) or lost in perfect calm, squatting under the shade of a cluster of Banyan tree having blissful countenance, ornamented with gems like Kaustubha and others,lost in sustained sleep (self forgetfulness) induced by Yoga and surrounded by disciples like Sanaka, Sanandana and others

Whereas Lord Śrī Viṣṇu comfortably reclines in the ocean of milk on the back of 'Śeṣa' (the primordial serpent) as His bed with Lakṣmī beside Him, putting on yellow garment (Pītāmbara) ornamented with gems like Kaustubha and others absorbed in

ustained sleep induced through Yoga and having the complexion of clouds laden with water. The supreme image is invariably one. How could He assume variable images ? And why so disfigured

The saying goes—What is contained in the universes is contained in the body It means that just as individuals pass through different stages of birth, life and death so also the universes have to undergo the stages of creation, sustenance and dissolution

This cosmos consisting of innumerable universes is created, it is sustained and finally dissolved Who is the creator of these universes ? The Supreme Being is verily attributeless and devoid of all sorts of activities Then how are these functions carried on ?

The three modes of nature viz the Sattva, the Rajas and the Tamas are the real cause These modes of Nature are essentially and fundamentally inanimate So they can not become dynamic independantly But when these come into contact with the Supreme Being, these do become dynamic

Out of these the Sattva is represented by the white colour, the Rajas, by the red and the Tamas by the dark The attitude created by them also varies The Sattva inspires one with the development of virtues and peace—supreme peace The Rajas inspires one with continuous activity, zeal and excitement etc ,whereas the Tamas excites sleep, anger, agony destruction etc

The image invested with the Sattva is the four mouthed Brahmā incessantly devoted to creation The image invested with the Rajas is that of Lord Nārāyana devoted to sustenance and constantly absorbed in Yoganidrā His peculiarity is that while performing actions He is invested with the supremely calm attribute—the Sattva but His dark complexion like that of clouds reflects the Tamas But the image of Śrī Śiva being invested with the Tamasic attribute of destruction is represented white like the colour of the pure Sphaṭika, that is, it conforms with the attribute termed as Sattva

According to Vaisnavites Lord Śrī Visnu holds the supreme place and His devotees are truly termed as 'devotees' It is they who are called 'Bhāgavata' and their life story is also

encompassed by this very term. The remembrance of God, the description of Lord's glory and the loud chanting of Divine names are all connected with them. None else but Śivajī is recognized as the foremost among these devotees of the Lord

Out of the five mouths of Brahmā one was severed by Śrī Śivajī. That head came to be invariably attached with His (Śiva's) hand forth with since Śivajī held it in His hand as a begging bowl and moving about asking for alms in it Lord Śrī Viṣṇu absolved him (Śivajī) from the obligation of the curse and as a result (Lord Visnu) came to be known as 'Haraśāpa Vimocakah ' The image of Lord Visnu installed in 'Kandiyura Kotta' near Tanjavura is famous by that name In that locality Śivajī is known by the name 'Brahmaśiraḥ Khandī' (one who severed the head of Brahmā).

The glory of Śivajī is described by Śaivites in the following manner, In order to gain the disc—(Sudarśana Cakra) Śrī Visṇu devoted Himself to the worship of Śrī Śivajī He offered Him 1008 lotus flowers everyday One day the lotuses, obtained for the purpose, fell short by one The Lord did not hesitate in offering one of His eyes for the purpose and as a result gained for Himself the 'Sudarśana Cakra' That is why in the areas known as Tiruvīṣihamipalai the Lord assumes the name Netrārpaṇeśvarah (नेत्रार्पणेश्वर) So who can be superior of the two and who inferior ?

The Supreme Being is invariably one How could His two images be differentiated from each other ? Nay, it could never be differentiated This fact can be understood through the saying Śrī *Hari and Hara* are invariably one Vain is the life of one who does not know this Is there any ground for such a conviction ? Why, there is some difference Harihara, Śankara and Nārāyana are the names (of the same Supreme Deity)

The left half of Śrī Śivajī's embodiment belongs to mother Pārvatī Similar is the bifurcation of the embodied form of Lord Śrī Visnu and the name 'Śankara-Nārāyana' refers to this fact The Śikhāmanis among the devotees of Lord Śiva are said as Śrī Ayyar In Tamil the superiors among the Śaivites are called 'Ālwār' Just consider what they say. They assert that Lord Viṣṇu places Candramaulīśvara on His right half

The Ālwārs are classified under twelve groups. Three of these groups are known as 'Ādi Ālwārs' One of these classes of 'Ādi Ālwārs' is known as 'Peyālwārs'. They describe the aspects of Bālājī of Tirupati thus—'On one side of His head He has matted hair and on the other side the long flowing hair Paraśu in one hand and in the left the Disc (Cakra) The snake on one side and on the other, a sacred thread of gold '

Still another class is the class of Poykaiyālwār. According to their conviction—'Śivajī has the complexion of melted gold In all the three manifestations pervades the entire universe consisting of the animate and inanimate objects These two deities inspite of their different aspects are complimentory to each other.

Śrī Kālidāsa, the prince among poets, remarks—'एकैवमूर्ति विभिदेत्रिधा सा' Śrī Kambana, the king among the poets, holds similar views—'Supreme is Lord Śiva, Lord Trivikrama alone is the most superior—those who thus describe Him in various ways fail to get at the ultimate reality

Hence efforts should be made to realize the omnipresence of Śrīman Nārāyaṇa everywhere

Nārāyana ! Nārāyana ! Nārāyaṇa !



न देशनियमो राजन् न कालनियमस्तथा ।
विद्यते नात्र सन्देहो विष्णोर्नामानुकीर्तने ॥
कालोऽस्ति दाने यज्ञे च स्नाने कालोऽस्ति सज्जपे ।
विष्णुसंकीर्तने कालो नास्त्यत्र पृथिवीतले ॥

O king, the Kīrtana of the Name of Visnu is not regulated by any rule about place and time There is no doubt about this The rule about time applies in the performance of charities, sacrifices, bath (in sacred waters) and even in the Japa of other mantras But no such rule applies in the case of the Kīrtana of the Name of Visnu which may be performed anywhere on earth, and by any person on earth at any time he chooses That is, everyone possesses the right to chant the Name of Visṇu at all times

—Haribhaktivilāsa



Saguṇa and Nirguṇa

—*Hanumanprasad Poddar*

What in fact the true nature of Bhagavān or Brahma is and whether He is *Saguṇa* (possessed of qualities) or *Nirguna* (devoid of qualities) is known only to Bhagavān or Brahma Himself No man can assert that Bhagavān is such and such in nature Nevertheless, those who have realized Him following any path whatsoever describe Him of that form which they have accepted and served individually for themselves This also is correct inasmuch as that particular form too is existent in Bhagavān and belongs to Him as well He is *Nirguna* and at the same time *Saguna* (Possessed of qualities). He is *Nirâkāra* (Formless) as well as *Sākāra* (having a form) At the same time He is both *Saguṇa* and *Nirguṇa*, *Sākāra* and *Nirākāra* as well He also transcends both the *Nirguna* and *Saguṇa*, the *Nirākāra* and *Sākāra*. He is indescribable and inconceivable It is for this reason that we come across all sorts of descriptions pertaining to Him in the *Upaniṣads* and the *Śāstras* or the scriptural treatises A few excerpts from the *Upaniṣads* may be examined here—

Nirguṇa—

'स होवाचैतद्वै तदक्षरं गार्गि ब्राह्मणा अभिवदन्त्यस्थूलमनण्वह्रस्वमदीर्घमलोहित-मस्नेहमच्छायमतमोऽवाय्वनाकाशमसङ्गमरसमगन्धमचक्षुष्कमश्रोत्रमवागमनोऽतेजस्क-मप्राणममुखममात्रमनन्तरमबाह्यम् ।'

Yājñavalkya said—"O Gārgī ! the *Brahmavādīs* call this Imperishable one other than the gross, different from the atom (anu), different from the small *(Hrasva)*, other than the huge *(Dīrgha)*, different from the red or any colour, other than the greasy, other than the shade or *chāyā*, different from the darkness, different from the air, other than the sky, without any

accompaniment, other than moisture or *rasa,* other than the smell *(gandha),* different from the eye, different from the ear, different from the speech, different from the mind, different from the heat *(tejas)* differnt from *Prāna* (breath), different from the mouth, different from the quantity, different from the inward and different also from the outward "

(Brhadāranyaka III 8 8)

'अदृष्टमव्यवहार्यमग्राह्यमलक्षणमचिन्त्यमव्यपदेश्य-
मेकात्मप्रत्ययसारं प्रपञ्चोपशमं शान्तं शिवमद्वैतम्।'

"That is unseen, beyond empirical dealings, beyond the grasp of the organs, uninferable, inconceivable, indescribable, its valid proof consists in the single belief in the Self· all phenomena cease in it; it is unchanging, auspicious and non-dual "

(Māndukya 7)

'अशब्दमस्पर्शमरूपमव्ययं ... . यत्'

"That which is without sound, beyond the touch, formless, immutable, without *rasa* (moisture), eternal and having no smell."

(Kathopanisad I 3 15)

'स एष नेति नेत्यात्मागृह्यः'

"This self or *Ātmā* is beyond comprehension by the terms 'Not even this' 'Not even this' *(Neti Neti)*"

(Brhadāranyaka IV 2 4)

Saguṇa—

'एष सर्वेश्वर .... हि भूतानाम्।'

"This one is the Lord of all This one is omniscient This one is the inner controller of all. This one is the source of all, this one indeed is the origin and dissolution of all beings

(Māndukya 6)

'सर्वकर्मा सर्वकामः .... सर्वमिदमभ्यात्तः।'

"He performs all the acts, is full of all the desires, possessed of all smell and of all sap. He has pervaded all this."

(Chāndogya III 14 4)

'एष हि द्रष्टा .... विज्ञानात्मा पुरुषः।'

"This one indeed is seer, He is the one who touches, hears,

smells and tastes. He is thinker, knower, doer and *Vijñānātmā Puruṣa* (i e the Person of the nature of Pure Knowledge) "

(Praśnopaniṣad IV 9)

Nirguṇa-Saguṇa—

'एको देवः .... चेता केवलो निर्गुणश्च ॥'

"The One God is hidden in all the beings He pervades through all He is the inner soul of all beings He is the supervisor of the acts and bestower of their fruits He is the abode of all creatures, the witness, sentient, the alone and *nirguna* i e devoid of the qualities "

(Śvetaśvatara VI 11)

Nirākāra—

'यत्तदद्रेश्यमग्राह्यमगोत्रमवर्णमचक्षुःश्रोत्रं तदपाणिपादम् ।'

"This one is invisible, beyond comprehension, *agotra* (without a lineage), *avarna* (without a class), without eyes, without ears and without hands and feet "

(Mundaka I 1 6)

Sākāra—

'सत्पुण्डरीकनयनं . ... भवति ससृतेः ॥'

× × ×

'एको वशी ... . शाश्वती नेतरेषाम् ॥'

"He is released from this world who concentrate his mind on Śrī Krsna, who possesses eyes charming like the lotus flowers, complexion shining like the clouds, who puts on yellow garment dazzling like the lightning, who has two arms, bears the postures of *Jñānamudrā*, sports the garlands of the forest-flowers, who is Īśvara, surrounded by *gopas* (cowherds), *gopīs* and cows, and is standing under the Kalpa tree, who is decked with divine ornaments, and is shining in the middle of a lotus of gems, served by the wind cool with the waves of *Kālindī's* water."

"That Bhagavān Śrī Kṛsna is always to be praised, who is the one only, who controls all and pervades everywhere Although He is one, yet He is manifested in many forms Only the wise men who worship every day that Bhagavān seated on the aforesaid seat attain eternal bliss and not others "

(Gopālapūrvatāpinī Upaniṣad I 10—12, 2 8)

And many other scriptures describe Bhagavān in Various ways. This goes on to prove that Bhagavān is *Saguna* as well as *Nirguna* Nothing is impossible for Him He, in whom two diametrically opposed attributes co-exist simultaneously is indeed Bhagavān The Vaidika scriptures introduce Him *Nirguna* as well as *Saguna* We should, therefore, accept both the views In respect with Bhagavān the objection as to how He can be *Saguṇa* and *Nirguṇa* both at one and the same time does not stand

Some people raise another objection They say that Brahma is *Niskala* or partless In case we accept Brahma both as *Saguna* and *Nirguna,* He would be partly *saguna* and partly *nirguna* And if this is true, then Brahma does not remain *Niskala* or *Niramśa* If He is not *niramśa,* how can He be Brahma ? *Śruti* expressly describes Brahma as *niramśa* or partless —

'निष्कलं निष्क्रियं शान्तं निरवद्यं निरञ्जनम्।'

"Brahma is without parts, without action, full of peace, faultless and free from illusion of *māyā* "

(Śvetāśvatara VI 19)

The answer to this objection is as follows It is not that some parts of Brahma is *nirguna* and some other part is *saguṇa* There can be no speculation of parts in Brahma Brahma is by nature simultaneously *nirguna* as well as *saguna* Mutually opposed qualities exist in Brahma always But if it is maintained that only that much part of Brahma in which qualities arise due to *māyā,* is *saguṇa* and the rest is *nirguna,* it will not be correct, since this supposition will only prove that Brahma is *nirguna* in essence It is only through *māyā* that it appears *saguna,* while in reality it is not so Those who hold the view of its being exclusively *nirguna* do assert that the appearance of *sagunatā* in Brahma is only due to the *upādhi* or deception of *māyā* Essentially Brahma is *Nirguṇa* alone and that is its true nature Such a *nirguna* Brahma can never become *Saguna*

But by the utterances of the *Vaidika* works quoted above and on the basis of the experiences of wise men, it is proved that Brahma or Bhagavān is both *Saguna* and *Nirguna* Thus, in spite of the fact that Brahma is partless, one has to conceive parts in

Brahma In respect with the concept of parts in Brahma, the objection is raised on their being less or more But in case of Brahma the parts are not conceived in this usual manner Just as Brahma is eternal and unlimited, the part of Brahma, too, is eternal and unlimited This principle has been supported by *śruti* with these words—

'पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं .... पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ।'

"That is whole This is whole From the whole, the whole comes out After taking the whole from the whole, the whole itself remains " Mathematics, too, proves that after taking out the infinite from the infinite what remains is infinite itself

There is no such object in our phenomenal world as may be said to possess two mutually opposed attributes simultaneous and may remain as one and whole in spite of being divided in many forms.

When we examine the opinion of those who say that it is through the illusion of *māyā* that Brahma has the appearance of *Saguna* nature, we arrive at the conclusion that this statement too proves in reality the *saguṇa* form of Brahma *Māyā* is the power of Brahma The power and the powerful are non-different like fire and its capacity for burning Therefore there is essentially no difference in saying that Brahma is *saguna* and in saying that Brahma exists in *Saguna* form with the help of its power, since any action is carried out with the energy or power only But the agent of that action is only he who possesses power or energy *(śaktimān)* Thus when it is said that Brahma becomes saguna with the help of *māyā*, it only proves that *saguna* too is the form of that Brahma.

In the *śāstras* this view of Bhagavān's being *saguṇa* and *nirguṇa* simultaneously has been explained in one more way, and this explanation appears to be very plausible and logical. Bhagavān is thoroughly beyond the attributes of *Prakrti*, and He is as such *Nirguna* In Him the intrinsic, inconceivable, endless and divine qualities of His ownself exist incessantly He is, therefore, *saguna* too He is thus '*nitya saguna*' while being *nitya nirguṇa* and he is *nitya nirguna* while being *nitya saguna* Bhagavān Śrī Krsna has Himself said to Śrī Śankara—

'यदद्य मे त्वया ... ... सृष्ट्यादिकमहं शिव ॥'

'O Śankara ! the extra-mundane (i e devoid of loss and acquisition—hānopādānarahita, having no difference of the body and the embodied one, the essential and divine body of Bhagavān) form of mine that you have seen today is a compact image of pure love and is of the nature of *sat*, i e the existence, *cit* or consciousness and *ānanda* or bliss The Upanisads describe this very form of mine as *'nirākāra' nirguṇa, sarvavyāpī or all-pervasive, niskriya* or actionless and as the Supreme Self transcending the highest one *(parātpara* Brahma) They call me *nirguna* finding no proof for the presence of *gunas* or qualities in me, since there is non-existence of *gunas (sattva, rajas* and *tamas)* produced by *Prakrti* in me, and they designate me as Īśvara for my being endless *(ananta)* This form of mine is not perceived by the corporal eyes, therefore, O Maheśvara, all these Vedas call me formless or *Nirākāra* The wise men call me Brahma since I pervade all with the part of my consciousness and they describe me as *niṣkriya* or without action for my not being the agent of the creation of the universe O Śiva, I myself do no act of creation, etc My parts or *amśa* undertake the work of creation etc , in the form of Brahmā, Visnu and Rudra '

(Padmapurāna, Pātāla Khanda—82 66—71)

This clarifies unequivocally whether the form of Bhagavān is *'nitya nirguṇa'* or *'nitya saguna'* To explain this very concept the author of the Bhāgavata while determining the essence or *tattva* has preached that Brahma is one of the names of *tattva* itself. The philosophers call this *tattva* by the term *'advayajñāna'* or the knowledge of non-duality and the devotees of three classes attain this knowledge of non-duality *(advayajñāna)* through three concepts of Brahma, Paramātmā and Bhagavān

The essence or tattva is one only, but it is experienced in three ways Explaining it the Vaisnavas say that the school of the Upanisads call it Brahma, the yogīs of Hiranyagarbha school give it the name of *Paramātmā* and the Vaiṣnavas designate it as Bhagavān The *jagattattva* is the knowledge of Brahma, the *Ātmatattva* is the knowledge of the Supreme Self or yoga and the

Īśvaratattva is the essence of Bhagavān or Bhakti. It is on account of difference in *līlā* or play that Bhagavān or Brahma has these three forms Bhagavān is by all means and at all times one single *tattva* and He is everything *Saguna-nirguna, sākāra-nirākāra* and also beyond all these This too is only a hint for understanding Him In reality, the nature of Bhagavān is known only to Bhagavān Himself and He cannot be perceived with the help of any logic or human effort It is only when He Himself mercifully exhorts that a fortunate *Sādhaka* becomes capable of knowing His nature in some parts—

'नायमात्मा प्रवचनेन .... तनूँ स्वाम् ॥'

"This *Ātmā* is not realized by listening to discourses it is realized neither through intellect, nor by studying the scriptures extensively When this one is pleased to favour a person with its knowledge it lays bare its form in front of him "

(Kathopaniṣad, I 2 23)

'सो जानइ जेहि देहु जनाई ।'

"He verily knows whom He makes Himself known "

(Mānasa II 126 1 1/2)



Thus the energy of Viṣnu, made up of the three Vedas, and derived from the property of goodness, presides in the sun, along with the seven beings belonging to it, and through the presence of this power the planet shines with intense radiance, dispersing with his beams the darkness that spreads over the whole world and hence the Munis praise him, the quiristers and nymphs of heaven sing and dance before him, and fierce spirits and holy sages attend upon his path Visnu, in the form of his active energy, never either rises or sets, and is at once the sevenfold sun and distinct from it In the same manner as a man approaching a mirror, placed upon a stand, beholds in it his own image, so the energy (or reflection) of Visnu is never disjoined (from the sun's car, which is the stand of the mirror), but remains month by month in the sun (as in the mirror), which is there stationed

—*Visnu Purāṇa*



Bhagavān Viṣṇu, Śiva and Brahmā are essentially One

—*Jayadayal Goyandka*

The Vedas accept two forms of Supreme Soul, *(Vıjñānānandaghana)* The Brahma devoıd of *Prakrtı* or Primal Nature has been desıgnated as *'Nırguṇa* Brahma' That form of Brahma which ıs associated with Prakṛtı or the *Māyā* constitutıng three-fold propertıes (trıguna) has been called the *'Saguna'* Brahma This *'Saguna'* Brahma, too, ıs taken to be two fold, vız *Nırākāra* (Form less) and *Sākāra* (ı e possessed of form). The *Nırākāra* and *Saguna* Brahma ıtself ıs referred to by the names such as Maheśvara, Parameśvara, etc That all-pervading formless, and Creator Parameśvara Hımself assumes the trıple manıfestatıons as Brahmā, Vısṇu and Maheśa and goes on producıng, nourishıng and destroyıng the creatıon In thıs way, the hıghest and Supreme Brahma Hımself who appears to be dıvıded in fıve forms ıs called Sadāśıva by the devotees of Śıva, Mahāvıṣnu by those of Vıṣṇu and Mahāśaktı by the worshıppers of Śakti Such evıdences are met with ın the cases of Śıva, Vısnu, Brahmā, Śaktı, Rāma and Krsna alıke The devotees of Śıva call thıs Imperıshable, *Nirguna* Brahma who ıs full of knowledge and Blıss as Maheśvara, the producer of the creatıon as Brahmā, ıts protector as Vısṇu and ıts destroyer as Rudra; and recognıse all these fıve as the forms of Śıva

Bhagavān Maheśvara says to Bhagavān Vısṇu:

त्रिधा भिन्नो .... ज्ञानमनन्तकम् ।

(Śıva, Rudra, Srstı IX 28,32,36-40)

'O Vısnu ! O Harī ! Although I am indıvısible by nature, yet for the creatıon, protectıon and destructıon of the world I am contınuıng to get dıvıded through the propertıes of *Sattva, Rajas,* etc. into three forms by the names Brahmā, Vıṣṇu and Rudra

respectively Just as by the contact with water etc, that is to say, by the reflection in them, the luminaries such as sun. etc. do not get associated with those water, etc similarly I, *Nirguṇa* as I am, do not get bound in contact with the guṇas. The difference among the various vessels made of clay is only that of name and form There is no real difference, as the clay is one. The existence itself of a cause in an effect is a testimony to this fact.

Having understrood this you should not have any reason for believing in difference In fact, the entire world of visible objects is the manifestation of Śiva This is my view I, yourself, this venerable Brahmā and my future manifestation as Rudra—all are one There is no difference among them Apprehension of this difference is the cause of bondage Neverthless, this Śiva form of mine is called imperishable, eternal and the primal form of all This indeed is the highest Brahma transcending the *gunas* and described as the Truth, the Knowledge and the infinite *(Satyam, Jñānam, Anantam)*

By these words of Maheśvara himself, all of these five facts are proved, viz He is Brahma recognised as the Truth, the Knowledge and the Infinite, He is eternal and full of Knowledge and Bliss *(Nitya-vijñānānanda-ghana)*, and devoid of properties *(nirguna)*, He is all-pervading and possessed of properties *(saguna)* and formless *(Nirākāra)* and lastly He is the form of Brahmā, Visṇu and Rudra These indeed are the five-faced *(Pañcavaktra)* Sadāśiva

Likewise, the worshipper of Visnu call the *Nirguna*, Supreme Brahma as 'Mahāvisnu', the all-pervading, formless and *Saguna* Brahma as 'Vāsudeva', the forms of Creator, protector and destroyer respectively as Brahmā, Visnu and Maheśa Glorifying Bhagavān Visnu the great sage Parāśara says

'I bow again and again to the unchanged, pure, imperishable, Supreme Soul, ever uniform, all-conquering, well-known by the names Hari, Hiraṇyagarbha, Śankara and Vāsudeva, the rescuer from the world, the cause of creation, sustenance and destruction of the univrese, possessed of one and many forms —assuming both gross and subtle forms, I salute to Him who is mainfest as

well as unmanifest and who grants emancipation. I adore that all pervading and Supreme Soul Bhagavān Vāsudeva, who takes the form of the universe and is the root cause of the creation, protection and annihilation of this world. I bow to the Imperishable Bhagavān Purusottama, who is the support of all, subtler than the very subtle object and is immanent in all

Here the term 'unmanifest' *(avyakta)* must be taken in the sense of the nirguna (devoid of qualities) form of the unchanging and pure *Paramātmā* The word 'manifest' *(vyakta)* must be taken to signify the *saguna* form This *saguna* form is said to be two fold, viz Gross and Subtle. Here the subtle form should be recognised as the all-pervading, Bhagavān Vāsudeva, who is the primal cause of even Brahmā, Visnu and Maheśa and has been pointed out by the name Purusottama, being subtler than the subtle ones The gross form here signifies Brahmā, Visnu and Maheśa who respectively effect the creation, sustenance and destruction of the universe and are referred to by the names Hiranyagarbha, Hari and Śankara. All these statements bear testimony to the aforesaid five forms of Bhgavān Śrī Visnu.

In the same way the gods while engaged in praying to goddess Mahāśakti say as follows:

'Obeisance be to you, O Eternal Power, who cause the creation, protection and annihilation of the universe through the forms of Brahmā Visnu and Maheśa O goddess Nārāyanī ! You are the receptacle of the qualities *(gunas)*. I salute you, who are full of qualities, too'

Bhagavān Krsna himself says·

'You are the mother of all the primal Nature ruling over all. You only exist as the first power at the time of creation of the universe and you willingly take up the forms possessed of the three qualities Although you are in fact *Nirguna* in yourself, yet you become *saguna* with a purpose You are in the form of Supreme Brahma *(Parama-brahma-svarūpa)*, the true, the Imperishable and Eternal You are in the form of the greatest lustre and you take up a body out of compassion for the devotees You are Sarvarūpā Sarveśvarī, Sarvādhāra (support of all) and

the Ultimate One You are the form of all seeds, worshipped by all and without a support. You are omniscient You bestow bliss and you are the highest of all sorts of auspiciousness.'

The foregoing excerpt proves clearly that Mahāśakti is not only full of the highest knowledge and bliss *(Vijñānānandaghana)* but she is also all-pervading, Brahma possessed of properties (saguna Brahma) and she takes on the forms of Brahmā, Visnu and Śiva rspectively with the purpose of producing, supporting and destroying the creation

Similarly, it has been said in respect with the venerable Brahmā

जय देवाधिदेवाय .... संहरतेऽखिलम् ।

(Devīpurāna 83 13-15)

'I bow respectfully to the Great Brahmā, who excels in intellect, possesses both manifest and unmanifest forms and also the triple properties *(trigunamaya)* and who is known to assume the three states of Brahmā, Visṇu and and Maheśa respectively creating, protecting and destroying the universe O the most glorious one, possessed with the property of *rajas*—you create the movable and immovable world, with the property of *Sattva* you protect them in the form of Visnu and lastly assuming the form predominant with *tamas* destroy the entire universe taking the form of Rudra '

These descriptions, too, prove the five forms of the venerable Brahma including that of the highest Brahma. By the term *avyakta* (unmanifest) the highest Brahma-form is established Through his being the cause, his all-pervading, shapeless and *saguna* form is proved Since He is agent in creation, its protection and destruction,his three forms Brahmā, Visnu and Maheśa, too, are proved

In the same way we have the following expressions of Bhagavān Śiva addressed to Bhagavān Śrī Rāma

'You are said to be Single *Purusa* who is beyond the *Prakrti* or Primal Nature and who is engaged by the power of his portion *(amśakalā)* in creating, supporting and destroying the world through the forms of Brahmā, Visnu and Rudra respectively. Being even formless you are the ultimate cause of the entire

universe. Being even one, you take up triple forms through association with *Māyā* At the time of the creation of the world you appear as Brahmā, while at the time of its protection you manifest yourself in your effulgent Visnu form and lastly at the moment of annihilation you assume my form of Śiva or Rudra '

Even in the *Rāmacaritmānasa* Bhagavān Śankara tells the adorable Pārvatī in respect with Bhagavān Śrī Rāma

'He who is devoid of attributes and form and is indescribable and without birth, takes on attributes due to His affection for the devotees Now, how does He who is devoid of properties become possessed of properties ? It is just as the water, snow and *upala* (i e hailstone) are not different from one another

Śrī Rāma is Sun known as *Sat* (the Existence), *Cit* (i e. the Consciousness) and *Ānanda* (the Bliss) and therefore there cannot be the slightest bit of ignorance '

'Rāma is Brahma, all-pervading, the highest bliss the Supreme Lord and the most ancient ' (I.115)

Likewise, Bhagavān Śrī Krsna too has been referred to as the Supreme Brahma, the Highest Soul in a number of works The *Brahmavaivarta-purāna* says·

'At the beginning of a new creation Bhagavān Nārāyana, Bhagavān Śiva and numerous other gods and goddesses were revealed from the different, divine limbs of Bhagavān Śrī Krsna ' In this context Śiva praises Bhagavān Śrī Krsna in these words

'You are in the form of this world, the lord of this Universe, even the Supreme Lord over the lords of the world You are cause of the world, nay the ultimate cause of all the causes of the world. You are the support of the universe, you are the indweller You are the succour of the Universe as well as its destroyer You become manifested in the world in various forms You are the seed of the fruits, the sustainer of the fruits, you assume the form of the fruits and are also the bestower of fruits '

In the Gītā Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣna tells about Himself in the following words.

'O Arjuna, I myself am the seat of that Imperishable Supreme Brahma, of that unchanging Dharma and indivisible and infinite

Bliss that is to say, that aforesaid imperishable Brahma, the immortal and eternal righteousness and the absolute Bliss—all that is not different from me.'

'I am the goal to be attained, the sustainer of all, the ruler of all, witness of meritorious and sinful deeds, living place for all, the refuge, one who helps without anticipating any return; I am the creation, dissolution and the substratum and receptacle of all, I am the immutable Cause of all I myself blaze as Sun and attract rains and pour down them O Arjuna ! I am immortality, as well as the Death I am existent (sat) as well as non-eixstent (asat). I myself am all here'

'O Dhanañjaya, there is nothing here besides me This whole universe is threaded on me, just like the gems strung in the thread Among the mortals that wise man who recognizes me as birthless (in reality without a birth), beginningless, and as the Supreme Lord of the universe is released from all the sins '

It is thus proved by the utterances quoted above that Bhagavān Śrī Śiva, Visnu, Brahmā, Śakti, Rāma, Krsna are essentially one When we contemplate in the light of this description we naturally arrive at the conclusion that all devotees are following the right principle accepting One True Supreme Soul, full of Consciousness and Bliss Difference of Name and Form does exist there, but in the essence of the object there is no difference The object intended by them is one and the same Thus recognizing that Lord as the highest, all pervasive, omniscient, omnipotent, changeless, imperishable, and full of Consciousness and Bliss, whatever worship of that Lord is done attributing any name and form to Him and following the path shown by the scriptures and preceptors that is the worship of that one and the same Supreme Soul

Ignorant of the aforesaid reality of the Supreme Soul Śiva, who is full of Consciousness and Bliss and is all-pervasive, some devotees of Śiva speak against Bhagavān Viṣṇu, while some Vaiṣṇavas censure Bhagavān Śiva. Some of the devotees, if not indulging in censure or aversion, choose to remain at least indifferent. But such a disposition is in fact taken to betray ignorance. If it is argued that by not following this course of

action the unswerving devotion to a Single God becomes defective, it is not true Just as a chaste wife having accepted her husband as the only person to be cherished, while doing services for him attends attentively and respectfully on the parents, elders, guests and other relatives and friends of her husband obeying his orders and for his pleasure, and by doing so she does not swerve even a bit from her duties to her husband but on the contrary achieves grace and glory (in fact, defect lies in thoughts resulting in sin, enjoyment and envy or in infidelity and malice, proper service is in fact duty), similarly one should cherish most any one name and form of the Supreme Soul and while worshipping that with single mind, one should serve sincerely and respectfully the other deities also with the permission of and for the pleasure of one's favourite god

In view of the above excerpts when there is only one Brahma full of Consciousness and Bliss and when in reality nothing other than that exists at all, censure insult or indifference towards any name and form of that Brahma is tantamount to a similar behaviour with that Brahma itself Nowhere Śrī Śiva, Śrī Visnu and Śrī Brahmā have either abused one another or asked anybody to do so They have rather cautioned against abuse and have praised such persons as recognize unity amongst this triad of deities It has been declared in the Śiva-purāna

'These (i e Brahmā, Visnu and Śiva) are produced from one another and they sustain one another They grow with the help of one another and behave in agreement with one another At one place Brahmā is praised while at another place Visnu is eulogized and at yet another place Mahādeva is lauded The greatness and glory of each of them has been described excelling that of another in such a way as they appear to be different from one another The men, who overcome by ignorance think that any particular deity among these three is superior or inferior to other, are born in next birth as *Rāksasas* (demons) or *Piśācas* (evil spirit) There is no doubt about it '

Bhagavān Śiva Himself tells Śrī Visnu.

'Whatever merit accrues from worshipping me, the same merit

comes out from worshipping you too. You, Visnu, live in my heart and I myself reside in your heart. He who does not apprehend diversity between both of us, is verily dear to me.'

Bhagavān Śrī Rāma tells Bhagavān Śrī Śiva·

'O Śankara, You live in my heart and I live in yours There is no difference between us Only ignorant and evil-minded people see difference between you and me We are of one form. People who see distinction between us undergo sufferings in Kumbhīpāka Naraka for one thousand Kalpas The same virtuous men who are your devotees have been my devotees and those who are my devotees bow to you with sincerest humility'.

Bhagavān Śrī Krsna likewise says to Bhagavān Śrī Śiva·

'Nobody is dearer to me than you I love you even more than my own self The sinful, ignorant and senseless men who revile you will be roasted in Kālasūtra hell till the existence of moon and the sun. He who gets a Śivalinga installed and worships it even once, lives in the heaven for a period of ten thousand kalpas By worshipping Śivalinga a man can obtain progeny, land, skill in learning, sons, relatives, excellence, knowledge and salvation and all other things A man who gives up this body uttering the word 'Śiva' attains liberation being purged of all sins of a crore of previous lives'.

In the *Śrīmadbhāgavata* (IV 7 54) Bhagavān Visnu thus says to Daksa Prajāpati.

'O Vipra, we three are One We are the souls of all beings He who does not see distinction among us, undoubtedly attains beatitude (liberation)'

Bhagavān Śrī Rāma is made to pronounce in the *Rāmacarita-mānasa* 'Such men who love Sankara revile me and such men who are my devotees but censure Śiva are condemned to live in the horrible *Naraka* for a Kalpa (IV 2)'.

'Convey to all with folded hands this another secret principle that without the worship of Śiva a man cannot achieve devotion to me (VII 45)'

This being the position, a man who censures or insults a deity worshipped by others in fact insults and censures his own favourite

deity Not knowing the real form of the Supreme Soul during the period preceding the realization of that Soul a particular form of his favourite deity is imagined by a devotee The real form of his favourite deity is quite different from whatever form he has imagined Nevertheless, the Supreme Lord accepts by all means and wholly his true and devoted worship done in accordance with his faith, feeling and liking, since the true form of God cannot be contemplated by anybody before the realization of God.

Therefore a man who worships any name and form of God without any desire, realizes ere long that immutable Supreme Soul who is full of Consciousness and Bliss. *(Vijñānānan-daghana)*. Of course, there might be delay for one who worships with some desires, but such person is however regarded as noble and meritorious (Gītā VII 18), inasmuch as he, too, realizes God in the end

My devotees without desires or with desires achieve Me at last.



The entire and mighty energy of Visnu which is called the three Vedas, or Rk, Yajusa and Śāma is that which enlightens the world, and destroys its iniquity It is that also which, during the continuance of things, is present as Visnu, actively engaged in the preservation of the universe, and abiding as the three Vedas within the sun The solar luminary, that appears in every month, is nothing else than that very supreme energy to Visnu which is composed of the three Vedas, influencing the motions of the planets, for the Rks (the Rg-Veda) shine in the morning, the prayers of the *Yajus* at noon, Vrhadrathantara and other portions of the Sāma in the afternoon This triple impersonation of Visnu distinguished by the titles of the three Vedas, is the energy of Visnu, which influences the positions of the sun

—*Visnu Purāna*



Viṣṇu Tattva

—Swami Ramsukhdas

The transcendental Absolute is invariably one. No substantial thing is so pervasive, immaculate and constant as He The same reality has been described as 'worth knowing' in the Gītā (XIII 12—17) He who is knowable who is worth knowing and who ought to be known, has been termed as 'knowable' After knowing Him, man having known the worth knowing, is freed from circle of birth and death That beginningless and transcendental Absolute divinity can neither be termed 'true' nor 'untrue' Words fall short of their expressiveness for He is beyond the scope of words.

Just as all sorts of scripts are latent everywhere in ink and just as various types of ornaments, idols and their limbs made of gold are to be found everywhere in gold so also innumerable articles, men and their limbs abide in the Absolute Divinity. So He stands holding the universes and permeating them with a fraction of His yogic power—

'विष्टभ्याहमिदं कृत्स्नमेकांशेन स्थितो जगत्' (Gītā X 42)

That God though not invested with sense organs enjoys the sense objects, being detached sustains the world and being attributeless becomes the enjoyer of the attributes He pervades the inner and the outer self of all beings and all the creatures are but His manifestations—'वासुदेव सर्वम्' All this is God (Gītā VII 19) From the three considerations viz time, place and causation God is the farthest and the nearest as well * Being extremely subtle He

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* In the far off and in the nearest place God exists He existed in the beginning, He exists now and He will remain ever Before causations He existed and He will exist after all causations get extinct and in the form of all causations He manifests Himself

is beyond the grasp of senses and the mind and intellect

The Lord being indivisible, appears as though divided among the individual creatures He lights up the whole world but none can afford to light Him up The Lord, the very embodiment of knowledge, permeates the hearts of one and all constantly and at all times This knowable Lord alone under the predominant sway of Rajas in the form of Brahmā brings forth the creation Under the perdominance or disposition called Sattva in the form of Visnu, He sustains all and under the predominance of Tamas in the form of Śiva dissolves the creation—'भूतभर्तृ च तज्ज्ञेयं ग्रसिष्णु प्रभविष्णु च' And that Godhead, which is the only object worth knowing is the sustainer of beings, the destroyer and the creator of all (Gītā XIII 16) * But in spite of these activities He remains attributeless and detached

That transcendental Absolute in His manifest form is called 'Mahāvisṇu' Endless are Brahmā, Visnu and Maheśa the creator, the sustainer and the destroyer of the innumerable universes But Mahāvisnu is invariable The Brahmā, the Visnu and the Maheśa pertaining to the different universes emanate from that Mahāvisṇu—

संभु बिरंचि बिष्नु भगवाना । उपजहिं जासु अंस तें नाना ।

(Mānasa I 144 3)

The same transcendental Absolute has been described in the 'Brahmavaivarta Purāna' as two armed Kṛṣna and four armed Viṣṇu—

त्वमेव भगवानाद्यो निर्गुणः प्रकृतेः परः ।
अर्द्धाङ्गो द्विभुजः कृष्णोऽप्यर्द्धाङ्गेन चतुर्भुजः ॥

(Prakrti Khanda 12 15)

He is the prime cause of all, attributeless and transcends the Prakṛti (Nature). He manifests Himself in dual aspects in the self same form the first half being two armed Kṛṣṇa and the other half–four armed aspect of Viṣṇu.

* सृष्टिस्थित्यन्तकरणाद् ब्रह्मविष्णुशिवात्मक ।
स सज्ञां याति भगवानेक एव जनार्दन ॥

द्विभुजो राधिकाकान्तो लक्ष्मीकान्तश्चतुर्भुजः ।
गोलोके द्विभुजस्तस्थौ गोपैर्गोपीभिरावृतः ॥
चतुर्भुजश्च वैकुण्ठं प्रययौ पद्मया सह ।
सर्वांशेन समौ तौ द्वौ कृष्णनारायणौ परौ ॥

(Prakrti 35 14 15)

The two armed Krsna is the husband of Rādhikā and the four-armed Visnu is the husband of Laksmī surrounded with the Gopas and Gopīs Śrī Krsna is stationed in the Goloka and Visnu in Vaikuntha These two Krsna and Visnu are invariably similar in all respects

When Arjuna was terrified to look at the most terrible universal form (having a thousand arms), God appeared before Arjuna firstly in four-armed form and subsequently in the two armed form—

इत्यर्जुनं वासुदेवस्तथोक्त्वा स्वकं रूपं दर्शयामास भूयः ।
आश्वासयामास च भीतमेनं भूत्वा पुनः सौम्यवपुर्महात्मा ॥

(Gītā XI 50)

'Bhagavān Vāsudeva again showed to him in the same way His own four-armed Form and then, assuming a gentle form, the high souled Śrī Krsna consoled the frightened Arjuna'.*

To put the thing in nutshell the self same Absolute Divinity assumes a thousand armed, four armed and two armed Form In consideration of the nature, faith and reverence, inclination etc of the devotees, the same Lord assumes five embodiments such as Visnu, the sun god, Śiva, Ganeśa and Śakti

सौराश्च शैवा गाणेशा वैष्णवाः शक्तिपूजकाः ।
मामेव प्राप्नुवन्तीह ह्यापः सागरं यथा ॥
एकोऽहं पञ्चधा जातः क्रीडया नामभिः किल ।
देवदत्तो यथा कश्चित् पुत्राद्याह्वाननामभिः ॥

(Padma Purāna Uttar 90 63-64)

The same Lord Mahāvisnu assumes the three forms of Brahmā, Visnu and Śiva for creation, sustenance and dissolution of the universe

(Padma Purāna Srsti II 114)

* This gentle form of Lord Krsna being of two armed has been denoted as human form also—'दृष्ट्वेदं मानुषं रूपं तव सौम्यं जनार्दन

(Gītā XI 51)

Just as rain water from all quarters flows down into the ocean so also the worshippers of Viṣṇu the Sun god, Śiva, Ganeśa and Śakti finally attain Me. Just as the same man named Deva Dutta is addressed differently as father and son etc So also assuming different forms the self 'I' manifesting 'Myself' in all the five forms am referred to by different names On the basis of these five qualified forms five different sects have sprung up viz the Vaiṣṇava, the Saura, the Śaiva the Gānapata and the Śākta No matter to what sect one belongs, one must have the firm conviction that all the manifestations of the Lord are essentially one If one is unable to develop such a firm conviction regarding the manifestation of one's choice to be the supreme, one should subordinate all others to it For example if Visnu is the object of one's adoration one should regard that all other gods such as Śiva and the Sun god etc are Visnu's worshippers and followers Still if one finds it difficult to arrive at this resolve, assuming that essentially the same Divinity pervades all climes and times, actions objects, persons, events, circumstances and ages etc as the supreme authority, one should give up all sorts of deliberations—internal and external

If while meditating on Visnu one haply gets the vision of gods like Śiva and Gaṇeśa etc the practicant should be pleased to regard that one's much adored God has of his own accord assuming the form of Śiva etc , appeared before him In case one is reminded of the world even then one should regard it as the manifestation of the Lord *

Lack of understanding is the cause of mutual attachment and envy and estrangement in various sects Some are faithful followers whereas some are enthusiastic propogandist (believing in slogans). The true follower sincerely practises the doctrines of

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* खं वायुमग्निं सलिलं महीं च ज्योतींषि सत्त्वानि दिशो द्रुमादीन्।
सरित्समुद्रांश्च हरेः शरीरं यत्किञ्च भूतं प्रणमेदनन्यः ॥

'With exclusive devotion the devotee bows to the sky, air, fire, water, earth, heavenly bodies, living beings cardinal points, trees and the like, rivers and seas and all created beings considering them as the body of the Lord '

(Śrīmad Bhāgavata XI 2 41)

his sect but the biased one has no regard for the doctrines. So the disturbances are caused by the over enthusiasts not the faithful followers

So long as the personal ego is there, the philosophical differences and bias for one's own sect continues to exist. The total abnegation of ego leaves no room for philosophical and sectarial controversies, what exists then is the ultimate reality. That ultimate reality is known by the names— Mahāvisnu, Sadāśiva, the Divine mother, the Supreme Absolute, Rāma and Krsna etc. and that alone is the ultimate object of all the practicants



Then there followed a conception of the lower strata of gods, agents of the Great God Visnu for the purpose of regulating this Universe These gods are Brahmā, Śiva and various other Devas and Devīs These gods and goddesses are conceptions of the various aspects of Śakti Some are entrusted with the work of creation, others with that of destruction

—*God Number*

विप्रा गावश्च वेदाश्च तपः सत्यं दमः शमः । श्रद्धा दया तितिक्षा च क्रतवश्च हरेस्तनूः ॥
स हि सर्वसुराध्यक्षो ह्यसुरद्विड् गुहाशयः । तन्मूला देवताः सर्वाः सेश्वराः सचतुर्मुखाः ।

Brāhmanas, cows and the Vedas, asceticism, truthfulness, control of the senses and the mind, reverence, compassion and endurance as well as sacrificial performances constitute (so many) embodiments of Śrī Hari He is unquestionably the ruler of all the gods, a (sworn) enemy of the demons and indeed the indweller of (all) hearts All the gods including Siva and Brahmā (the four-faced creator) have their origin in Him

—*Bhāgavata (X 4 41-42)*



Viṣṇu Sahasranāma Stotra

—*Chavalı Subba Rao*

Of all the stotras of Vısnu, 'Vıṣnu Sahasranāma Stotra' ıs considered the top-most as ın ıt ıs descrıbed the greatness of Vısnu among all the deıtıes He ıs descrıbed as the one God who ıs the Creator of all thıs Unıverse and ın whom all thıngs merge ın the end at the tıme of 'Pralaya '

"yatah sarvānı bhūtānı, bhavantyādı yugāgame ı
yasmınśca pralayam yāntı, punaı eva yugaksaye" ıı

He ıs the one God from whom allbeıngs arıse at the begınnıng of Creatıon and who only survıves at the tıme of Pralaya ı e at the end of thıs Unıverse All the other gods are Hıs creatıon only Everythıng sustaıns at Hıs wıll He ıs the creator, sustaıner and destroyer of all beıngs

Thıs Stortra occurs ın the 'Bhīsma Parva' of Mahābhārata wrıtten by Maharsı Veda-Vyāsa who ıs regarded as an ıncarnatıon of Śrī Mahā Vısnu

When Yudhısthıra, the Pāndava Prınce, requested hıs grandsıre, Bhīsma, to enlıghten hım about the maın deıty by worshıppıng whom men obtaın solace and get rıd of all obstacles ın lıfe, the latter told hım that by worshıppıng the great Lord, Śrī Mahā Vısnu, who ıs the master of thıs entıre creatıon by medıtatıng on Hıs thousand names wıth great faıth wıll undoubtedly obtaın Hıs blıss and get over all the dıffıcultıes ın lıfe and obtaın salvatıon ın the end He ıs omnıscıent and omnı poetnt and ıs ever ready to protect hıs devotees, ırrespectıve of caste, sex or creed

He, who ever recıtes Hıs thousand names wıth a pure heart obtaıns peace of mınd ın thıs world and salvatıon after death

He ıs ever-restıng on 'Ādıśesa' ın the ocean of mılk, shınıng brıllıantly wıth garlands of whıte pearls and havıng the precıous

stone 'Kaustubha' on his chest and having lotus, discus, mace and conch in His four hands

He is 'Virāt Purusa'. The three worlds are His body. The Earth is His feet; the Sky His navel; the air is His breath, the Sun and the Moon are His two lotus-like eyes, the four sides are his ears, the Heaven His head, the Fire is His mouth; the Ocean is His abdomen and all creatures, devas, human beings; nāgas, gandharvas , and rāksasas are all embedded in His body.

He is Peace personified, ever smiling. He is the support of the entire Universe, God of gods, ever worshipped by the Goddess Laksmī Those who worship Him by reciting His thousand names with a pure heart are sure to get all their desires fulfilled They are never subjected to any fear, jealousy, penury or disease They will be free from anger and lust They become pure and fearless

He is All-powerful He is the source of all Vedas and all knowledge He is Eternal The entire Universe is His Form.

Whenever 'Dharma' is at stake and whenever the pious and the righteous are troubled by the wicked, He takes incarnation and re-establishes the 'Dharma' by punishing the wicked and protecting the righteous

'paritrānāya sādhūnām, Vināśāya ca duskrtām
dharma samsthāpanārthāya, sambhavāmi yuge yuge '

All evils vanish by uttering the name 'Nārāyana'

Om Tat Sat !



Viṣṇu and Bhāgavata

—*P S Seshagırı Rao*

The word Bhāgavata ıs derıved from the word Bhagavān, whıch ıs derıved from the word Bhaga whıch means wealth and prosperıty In a lesser sense the word Bhagavān means an adorable one But ın the real sense of the term as ıs descrıbed ın purānas—

ऐश्वर्यस्य समग्रस्य धर्मस्य यशसः श्रियः ।
ज्ञानविज्ञानयोश्चैव षण्णां भग इतीरणा ॥

(Vısnu P 6 5 74)

It means a beıng replete wıth the sıx attrıbutes of wealth, fame and the lıke In thıs sense, who ıs Bhagavān, ıs a pertınent questıon In thıs regard we have a stanza in Bhāgavata.

अथापि यत्पादनखावसृष्टं जगद् विरिञ्चोपहृतार्हणाम्भः ।
सेशं पुनात्यन्यतमो मुकुन्दात् को नाम लोके भगवत्पदार्थः ॥

(I 18 21)

'Whenever the water of worshıp collected by Brahmā touchıng whose foot-naıls sanctıfıes the entıre world includıng Śıva, who else other than Mukunda, can be the meanıng of the word Bhagavān ?'

It ıs clear from thıs and other such stanzas ın Bhāgavata that Vısnu ıs Bhagavān, the Supreme God sanctıfyıng even Brahmā and Śıva Bhāgavata means 'Related to Bhagavān ' So ıt ıs what ıs related to Vısnu, Hıs supremacy and greatness ıs the subȷect matter of the text Bhāgavata

The theory put forward by Max Muellar that Hındus praıse each and every god as Supreme when they offer prayers to him ıs untenable The spırıt of the Rgveda ıs badly mıssed by hım The Rgveda declares that ıt ıs only one God who bears the names of all other gods and that He ıs the Creator and Sustaıner of the entıre unıverse

यो नः पिता जनिता यो विधाता धामानि वेद भुवनानि विश्वा ।
यो देवानां नामधा एक एव तं संप्रश्नं भुवना यन्त्यन्या ॥

(Rv X 82 3)

But Who is the One who bears the names of all other gods? The same hymn answers this question also, but only in a subtle way.

तमिद्गर्भं प्रथमं दध्र आपो यत्र देवाः समगच्छन्त विश्वे ।
अजस्य नाभावध्येकमर्पितं यस्मिन् विश्वानि भुवनानि तस्थुः ॥

(Rv X 82 6)

The One is He, whose navel gave rise to an extra-ordinary thing in which are housed all the worlds This enigmatic description refers to the lotus in Viṣṇu's navel, the lotus which assumed the form of the entire world So doubtlessly it is Visnu who is the bearer of the names of all other gods Right from the Rgvedic period the seers have offered their prayers to Viṣṇu who bears the names of Agni, Mitra, Varuna and so on. Not that other 'gods do not exist They do exist. But it is their indweller Viṣṇu to whom the prayers are mainly directed

He is the bearer of not merely the names of all gods, but all the names in the world are His names only A stanza in Bhāgavata makes this point clear—

स वै ममाशेषविशेषमायानिषेधनिर्वाणसुखानुभूतिः ।
स सर्वनामा स च विश्वरूपः प्रसीदतामनिरुक्तात्मशक्तिः ॥

(VI 4 28)

'May He, the bearer of all names and all forms whose self-power has not been amply described, be propitious to me '

The Aitareya Upanisad goes a step further and declares that not merely the names, but all articulate and inarticulate sounds are expressions denoting Him and His attributes

* ता वा एताः सर्वा ऋचः सर्वे वेदाः सर्वे घोषा एकैव व्याहृतिः ।

(Ai UP II 1 12)

So it is clear that Viṣṇu is Bhagavān and his greatness is the subject matter of not merely Bhāgavata but all sacred texts

* These lines are not available in Aitareya Upanisad

—Editor

It is a common belief that the three gods Brahmā, Visnu and Śiva are the creator, protcetor and destroyer of the universe respectively Right from the opening stanza Bhāgavata belies this belief and establishes that Visnu alone is the creator and so on, of the universe Both Brahmā and Śiva are instruments in his hands, in the act of creation and destruction They are his subordinates This is clear from Brahmā's words to Nārada

सृजामि तन्नियुक्तोऽहं हरो हरति तद्वशः ।
विश्वं पुरुषरूपेण परिपाति त्रिशक्तिधृक् ॥

(II 6 31)

'At his behest I create the universe Controlled by Him, Śiva destroys Visnu bearing the form of Purusa and endowed with all the three powers, protects the universe '

In the same context Brahmā says to Nārada

नारायणपरा वेदा देवा नारायणाङ्गजाः ।
नारायणपरा लोका नारायणपरा मखाः ॥
नारायणपरो योगो नारायणपरं तपः ।
नारायणपरं ज्ञानं नारायणपरा गतिः ॥

(II 5 15-16)

'The vedas have Nārāyana as their purport All the gods are born from Nārāyana's limbs He is above all the worlds All sacrifices, yogas and penances are intended to attain His grace He is the supreme object of Knowledge and the supreme attainable '

We have another and almost identical passage in the first Skandha This is Sūta's address to Śaunaka

वासुदेवपरा वेदा वासुदेवपरा मखाः ।
वासुदेवपरा योगा वासुदेवपरा. क्रियाः ॥
वासुदेवपरं ज्ञानं वासुदेवपरं तपः ।
वासुदेवपरो धर्मो वासुदेवपरा गतिः ॥

(I 2 28-29)

In the same passage referred to earlier Brahmā says to Nārada —

नाहं न यूयं यदृता गतिं विदुर्न वामदेवः किमुतापरे सुरा. ।
तन्मायया मोहितबुद्धयस्त्विदं विनिर्मितं चात्मसम विचक्ष्महे ॥

(II 6 36)

'Neither myself nor you all nor even Śiva knows His true nature, whence the other gods ? With our minds erring under His will, we perceive this creation of His only to the extent of our capacities '

Nārada has praised Brahmā and said that himself being the creator there was no necessity to perform any penance for which Brahmā objects

नानृतं तव तच्चापि यथा मां प्रब्रवीषि भोः ।
अविज्ञाय परं मत्त एतावत्त्वं यतो हि मे ॥

(II 5 10)

'Is it not false that you are speaking like this to me, not knowing Him Who is superior to me, and not knowing my own limitations ?'

We can consider a few passages wherein Śiva addresses his affectionate persons

Durvāsā has wronged Ambarīsa and Visnu's Sudarśana Cakra chases him Durvāsā runs for life to Kailāsa and begs Śiva for refuge But the latter declines—

वयं न तात प्रभवाम भूम्नि यस्मिन् परेऽन्येप्यजजीवकोशाः ।
भवन्ति काले न भवन्ति हीदृशाः सहस्रशो यत्र वय भ्रमामः ॥

(IX 4 56)

'Dear one, I do not venture to counter the will of the infinite One, in whom such Brahmāndas like this are born and perish in thousands and in one such of which I wonder

अहं सनत्कुमारश्च नारदो भगवानजः ।
कपिलोऽपान्तरतमो देवलो धर्म आसुरिः ॥
मरीचिप्रमुखाश्चान्ये सिद्धेशाः पारदर्शिनः ।
विदाम न वयं सर्वे यन्मायां माययाऽऽवृताः ॥
तस्य विश्वेश्वरस्येदं शस्त्रं दुर्विषहं हि नः ।
तमेव शरणं याहि हरिस्ते शं विधास्यति ॥

(IX 4 57-59)

'Neither myself, nor Sanatkumāra , nor even the venerable

Brahmā .knows Hıs wıll who has bound us ın creatıon Thıs weapon of Hıs, the lord of the unıverse, ıs unbearable for us Take refuge ın Harı Hımself He wıll do you good '

We can refer to another context ın the fourth Skandha. Daksa's sacrıfıce whıch was destroyed by Śıva earlıer has been started agaın after things have been sorted out Vısnu who had not come earlıer to receıve the oblatıons now comes when the Rtvık calls hım to offer oblatıons

तमुपागतमालक्ष्य सर्वे सुरगणादयः ।
प्रणेमुः सहसोत्थाय ब्रह्मेन्द्रत्र्यक्षनायकाः ॥
तत्तेजसा हतरुचः सन्नजिह्वाः ससाध्वसाः ।
मूर्ध्ना धृताञ्जलिपुटा उपतस्थुरधोक्षजम् ॥
अप्यर्वाग्वृत्तयो यस्य महित्वात्मभुवादय. ।
यथामति गृणन्ति स्म कृतानुग्रहविग्रहम् ॥

(IV 7 22-24)

'Observıng that Vısnu had come›all the gods led by Brahmā, Śıva and Indra got up suddenly and offered theır salutatıons Theır lustre fadıng ın front of hıs refulgence, theır tongues almost dead wıth fear, they folded theır hands on theır heads and praısed Adhoksaja Even though Brahmā and others are very ınferıor to him so far as greatness ıs concerned, they praısed Hım to the best of theır capacıtıes when He gracıously appears before them '

We can refer to another passage whereın ıt ıs stated that Śıva could not destroy the Trıpura Only Vısnu came to hıs rescue and helped hım achıeve the destructıon of Trıpura

विलोक्य भग्नसंकल्पं विमनस्कं वृषध्वजम् ।
तदायं भगवान् विष्णुस्तत्रोपायमकल्पयत् ॥

(VII 10 61)

'Seeıng the ox-bannered Śıva thwarted in hıs attempt and dısappoınted, thıs venerable god Vısnu devısed a plan to achıeve the aım '

There are many passages lıke these ın the Bhāgavata whereın Vısnu ıs descrıbed as the Supreme God Sımılarly the supremacy of Vısnu ıs establıshed by the fact that he ıs the bestower of the

highest of human values, that is Moksa. The gods who are pleased with Mucukunda say this to him·

वरं वृणीष्व भद्रं ते ऋते कैवल्यमद्य न. ।
एक एवेश्वरस्तस्य भगवान् विष्णुरव्ययः ॥

(X.51 20)

'Ask for any boon from us except Moksa Only one person is competant to bestow it and He is the eternal God Viṣṇu.'

We can adduce any number of passages from the text to prove Viṣnu's supremacy, we see that Brahmā offers his prayers during or before almost all incarnations praising Him as the supreme Lord of the universe

Incidentally the stotras that occur in Bhāgavata belong to two categories The first wherein Visṇu is praised in his original or incarnation form and the second wherein others are praised. While the former are very clear regarding their purport, the latter are to be carefully studied While many epithets and attributes therein apply to the individual souls which are praised, there are many other epithets which do not apply to the finite praised soul but to the supreme being. The upanisadic sentence 'He who controls the souls from within' is to be noted, such prayers indicate that prayers offered do not stop short at the limited souls but are intended to reach the indweller of the individual souls. This is expressed in the text itself

प्रत्युद्गमप्रश्रयणाभिवादनं विधीयते साधु मिथः सुमध्यमे ।
प्राज्ञैः परस्मै पुरुषाय चेतसा गुहाशयायैव न देहमानिने ॥

(IV 3 22)

'Dear Pārvatī, gettting up, being humble and offering salutations and prayers are enjoined by the learned not merely with regard to the soul . in the corporal frame but for the dweller in the hearts of jīvas'

At this point it will be pertinent to refer to a particular stanza in the eighth skandha

न ते गिरित्राखिललोकपालविरिञ्चवैकुण्ठसुरेन्द्रगम्यम् ।
ज्योतिः परं यत्र रजस्तमश्च सत्त्वं न यद् ब्रह्म निरस्तभेदम् ॥

(VIII 7 31)

In this stanza it is said that Śiva's greatness is beyond the reach of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Indra and others and his state is one which is beyond the three Guṇas and he is the one Brahma Nowhere else in Bhāgavata is mentioned that Śiva is superior to Viṣṇu or Brahmā Not even a cursory reference of the sort. This stanza is not to be found in many old manuscripts and consequently many commentators have not heard of this. In the two great epics Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata, also the supremacy of Viṣṇu can be perceived in all its splendour



Repeat the name of Hari

Puruṣottama, abiding in the hearts of men, takes away all the sins of the Kali age, produced by place or property. Bhagavān, abiding in the heart, and heard, repeated, read of, worshipped, or honoured, dissipates the ills of men for ten thousand births As fire, entering into the substance of gold, purifies it from the alloy with which it is debased in the mine. so Visnu, united with the devotee, is the refiner from all that is evil By learning, penance, suppression of breath, friendship, pilgrimage, ablution, mortification, gifts, prayer, the soul attains not that exceeding purity which it derives from the presence of Visnu. Therefore, with all your soul, O king, hold Keśava ever present in your heart Let one about to die be most careful in this, for so he goes to supreme felicity Let the name of the supreme god, Viṣṇu, be repeated diligently by all in their last moments; for he who desires liberation shall attain it by the frequent repetition of the name of Krsṇa Final felicity is derived in the Krta age from holy study, in the Tretā, from religious rites In the Dvāpara it is attined by pious services, but in the Kali age it is secured by repeating the name of Hari

—*Visnu Purāṇa*



Salutations to Thee ! O Glorious Viṣṇu

—Sadhvi Sri Kamlesh Kumari

Salutations to Thee ! O Glorious Viṣṇu ! Supreme Lord !

Man's little intellect tries, and tries in vain
To fathom the Unfathomable, and define the Indefinable.
Beyond all Attributes, and yet Source of all attributes,
Thou dost sustain countless worlds of attributes

Can a little candle gauge the Sun's omnipresent light ?
Or a drop of water measure the boundless Ocean ?
Or a mere torch try to see the Hand that holds it ?
Even so it is with our little shallow ego.

And yet is it not natural for us,
Motivated as we are by Thy very 'Prakrti' ?
That goads us on to try and understand Thee—
Who art beyond all human understanding and perception—
And try to fit the limitless macrocosm
Into the narrow microcosm—both Thy creations

For this much we know, that we all are part of Thee
Each divine spark is but part of the Divine Light
That emanates gloriously, endlessly, from Thee
Sages, seers, ascetics, priests and learned scholars,
Renowned far and wide for their erudition,
Are but small children picking up tiny pebbles
From the vast sands on the endless shores of Eternity

(To be continued)



Attaining Lord Viṣṇu's Favour through the Recitation of Śrī Viṣṇu Sahasranāma

(A Thousand Appellations of Lord Viṣṇu)

Formerly I used to stay in a small village of Cautra Province (now known as Madhya Pradesh) since my childhood I had developed love of God in Me, so soon after becoming literate, it became my routine to reverently recite Śrī Visnu Sahasranāma before I took my dinner. When I was sixteen, one night I had a vision in my dream of an ascetic standing before me in his usual garb, saying to me—'He whose names are regularly recited is none else than the one verily called Viṣnu I always safeguard my devotee. This day only after a couple of hours your village will be on fire Get all your belongings loaded up in a bullock cart and get out of the village without any delay ' Meanwhile I rose from my dream since my belief in such ominous things was not unusual So I felt gratified that the Lord had saved me from a calamity by appearing before me in person At once I loaded my luggage and other belongings on a bullock cart and went out of the village I related the story to other brethren of the village and everyone turned a deaf ear to me Soon, as ill luck would have it, the village was on flames The flames rose sky high There was consternation all round No pain was spared to bring the conflagration under control but the sweeping winds reduced everything to ashes Tears had welled up my eyes at the moment but I felt gratified again and again at the remembrance of the divine favour bestowed on me through daily recitation of Visnu Sahasranāma

—Adapted from 'Kalyana'



Viṣṇu or Sūrya

The entire and mighty energy of Viṣnu, which is called the three Vedas, or Rk, Yajus, and Sāma, is that which enlightens the world, and destroys its iniquity It is that also which, during the continuance of things, is present as Viṣṇu, actively engaged in the preservation of the universe, and abiding as the three Vedas within the sun The solar luminary, that appears in every month, is nothing else than that very supreme energy of Viṣnu which is composed of the three Vedas, influencing the motions of the planet, for the Rks (the hymns of the Ṛg-veda) shine in the morning, the prayers of the Yajus at noon, and the Vrhadrathantara and other portions of the Sāma in the afternoon This triple impersonation of Visnu, distinguished by the titles of the three Vedas, is the energy of Visnu, which influences the positions of the sun

Thus the energy of Visnu, made up of the three Vedas, and derived from the property of goodness, presides in the sun, along with the seven beings belonging to it; and through the presence of this power the planet shines with intense radiance, dispersing with his beams the darkness that spreads over the whole world. and hence the Munis praise him, the quiristers and nymphs of heaven sing and dance before Him, and fierce spirits and holy sages attend upon his path Visnu, in the form of his active energy, never either rises or sets, and is at once the sevenfold sun and distinct from it In the same manner as a man approaching a mirror, placed upon a stand, beholds in it his own image, so the energy (or reflection) of Visnu is never disjoined (from the sun's car, which is the stand of the mirror), but remains month by month in the sun (as in the mirror), which is there stationed.

The sovereign sun, oh Brahman, the cause of day and night, perpetually revolves, affording delight to the gods, to the progenitors, and to mankind Cherished by the Susumnā ray of the sun, the moon is fed to the full in the fortnight of its growth, and in the fortnight of its wane the ambrosia of its substance is perpetually drunk by the immortals, until the last day of the half month, when two remaining digits are drunk by the progenitors; hence these two orders of beings are nourished by the sun. The moisture of the earth, which the sun attracts by his rays, he again parts with for the fertilization of the grain, and the nutriment of all terrestrial creatures, and consequently the sun is the source of subsistence to every class of living things, to gods, progenitors, mankind, and the rest. The sun, Maitreya, satisfies the wants of the gods for a fortnight (at a time); those of the progenitors once a month, and those of men and other animals daily

—*Visnupurāna*



एकस्त्वमात्मा पुरुषः पुराणः सत्यः स्वयंज्योतिरनन्त आद्यः ।
नित्योऽक्षरोऽजस्रसुखो निरञ्जनः पूर्णोऽद्वयो मुक्त उपाधितोऽमृतः ॥
एवंविधं त्वां सकलात्मनामपि स्वात्मानमात्मात्मतया विचक्षते ।
गुर्वर्कलब्धोपनिषत्सुचक्षुषा ये ते तरन्तीव भवानृताम्बुधिम् ॥

You are the one Self, the most ancient Person, real, self-luminous, infinite, the very first, eternal, imperishable, full of uninterrupted Bliss, taintless (untouched by māyā), perfect, secondless, devoid of all adjuncts and immortal They (surely) cross as it were the false ocean of mundane existence, who perceive through the penetrating eye of wisdom obtained from the sun-like preceptor You as such, the very self of all living beings, as the self of their own self

—*Bhāgavata (X 14 23-24)*



Viṣṇu Sahasranāma and its Excellence

—*Dr Suresh Chandra Sharma*

Like Gītā, Visnu Sahasranāma stotra is a part of Mahābhārata. Inspired by the spiritual excellence and efficacy of these scriptures Śankarācārya prescribed their recitation (गेय गीता नाम सहस्रम्) as the powerful spiritual practice for all types of aspirants Since then it became a normal practice to recite Gītā and Sahasranāma simultaneously in daily devotional activities

Literally 'Viṣnu Sahasranāma' means thousand names of Viṣṇu or the all pervading deity. But the spirit of the word 'Thousand' is 'countless' The stotra, therefore, signifies the limitless nature of God God is infinite and the ways to reach Him are also infinite. One of the opening verses unfolds this idea as below—

नमः समस्तभूतानामादिभूताय भूभृते ।
अनेकरूपरूपाय विष्णवे प्रभविष्णवे ॥

'Salutations to the primordial cause of all beings who holds this earth and who is all powerful with many forms '

The concluding verse also points out the same idea in these words—

एको विष्णुर्महद्भूतं पृथग्भूतान्यनेकशः ।
त्रींल्लोकान्व्याप्य भूतात्मा भुङ्क्ते विश्वभुगव्ययः ॥

(140)

'The enjoyer of the whole universe, imperishable Visnu alone is one such who becomes many and assume various forms and thus pervades the entire creation ' In this way, the stotra unfolds the real spirit of Indian philosophy—the unity in diversity and the immanence as well as transcendence of God

The unique feature of Visnu-Sahasranāma is the harmony of theism and pantheism The names given in stotra convey not only the theistic meaning behind them but are universal in sense The deity being invoked through these names is not only the Viṣṇu of

a particular sect but an all pervading Vāsudeva. This characteristic of Visnu Sahasranāma excels all other stotra literature. The following verse shows this characteristic beauty of stotra in an excellent way.

विश्वमूर्तिर्महामूर्तिर्दीप्तमूर्तिरमूर्तिमान् ।
अनेकमूर्तिरव्यक्तः शतमूर्तिः शताननः ॥

(90)

The names given in above verse are not in any way narrow in sense Visnu Sahasranāma is therefore above all social and geographical factors. It belongs to the whole human race

This, in nutshell, is about the philosophical excellence of Visnu Sahasranāma As regards the spiritual excellence there is an interesting story One day I was reading the life and teaching of Svāmī Yatīśvarānandajī (Vice President of Rāmakrsna Matha 1889-1966) His early name was Sureśa Candra Bhattācārya He was the initiated disciple of Svāmī Brahmānandajī the direct disciple of Śrī Rāmakṛsna and the first president of Matha and Mission Svāmī Brahmānandajī one day asked 'Sureśa' to write an article for Prabuddha Bhārata, a monthly of Rāmakrsna order. He expressed his unability to do so telling that he has no ideas of his own and hence it is in vain to attempt so Svāmī Brahmānandajī gave him the instruction to recite daily Visnu Sahasranāma and Candī He assured him that if he continues to recite for three years he will not lack ideas Svāmī Yatīśvarānanda followed his instructions and later on confirmed the truth of Brahmānandajī's words This incident gave the present writer a lot of inspiration The present writer also, has verified in his own life the claim made by Brahmānandajī and also as expressed by the Sahasranāma itself (वेदान्तगोब्राह्मण).

Visnu Sahasranāma is excellent in more than one way It has been expressed by several votaries Spiritual luminaries like Śrī Śankarācārya and very recently Śrī Vinobājī have given a very high place and position to this stotra

The spiritual excellence of Sahasranāma can be realised by one and all through the reflection on the meaning of names and by way of recitation for a longer period The writer of these lines has

full conviction that the continuous chanting of Sahasranāma for some years will bestow the devotees with the experience of spiritual communion with their beloved Lord. The experience of spiritual kinship with God is the aim of the life and the continuous chanting of stotra will definitely fruition in this experience as expressed in the following verse.

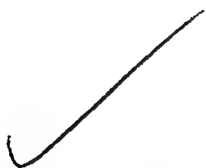
स्तव्य· स्तवप्रियः स्तोत्रं स्तुतिः स्तोता रणप्रिय· ।
पूर्णः पूरयिता पुण्यः पुण्यकीर्तिरनामय. ॥

(86)

The verse states that the deity (स्तव्य) the stotra (स्तोत्र), the invocation (स्तुति), the devotee (स्तोता) are all one This is the spiritual experience of identity in difference Any spiritual aspirant who reflects deeply on the meaning of names of Lord and contemplates over them and recites the stotra with devotional fervour is bound to have such experience of spiritual communion.

Śrī Rāmakṛsna's life is the proof of such an experience One day Śrī Rāmakrsna was seated on the corridor of Rādhākānta temple at Daksinesvara Some devotee was reading from Bhāgavatam while listening to the discourse Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa had the spiritual experience that a beam of light has ornated from the feet of Lord Krsna in temple. It has encircled the Bhāgavatam (Book) and has finally merged in his (Rāmakrṣna's) own person After having this experience Śrī Rāmakṛṣna most frequently used to say—Bhakta (भक्त) Bhāgavata (भागवत) and Bhagavān (भगवान्) are one Chanting of stotra too with devotional fervour will certainly fruition in spiritual experience In this context, it is advisable to remember the words of Holy Mother Śāradā Devī the spiritual consort of Śrī Rāmakrsṇa She used to say that although there is smell in sandal wood but it can be felt only when rubbed with moisture Similarly the excellence of Visnu Sahasranāma will be felt by an individual aspirant when chanted and contemplated with faith and love







Viṣṇu in the Ṛg-Veda

—J R Kamath

Visnu is an important Vaidika deity. He is always spoken of with great regard and seriousness There is no limit to his greatness In one of the early hymns addressed to Him, in the Veda, it is stated that Visnu dominates over all the three regions, the earth, mid-region and the celestial, and from the dust of his feet, creation began (I 22 17) In the Rg Veda Samhitā, translated by Satyaprakāśa Saraswatī and Satyakāma Vidyālaṅkara this particular passage is referred by them to mean "His one step is rooted in the deep dark mystery beyond the knowledge of mankind " And in the next verse, it is stated that after measuring with his three steps He sustains and preserves the sanctity of all vital functions that keep life ticking (I.22 18), Behold the marvellous creations of his, who fulfils our noble aspirations. He is a true friend of Indra (translated by the aforesaid authors as "he is the true friend of the soul") (I.22 19), the next verse I 22 20 reads The wise and true seekers realize Him through meditation within their own self; they see vividly as the eye ranges over the sky (tad visnoh paramam padam sadā paśyanti sūrayah divīva caksur ātatam.), the sūkta finally ends thus "tad viprāso vipanyavo jāgrvāmsah Samindhate/visnor yat paramam padam" (I 22 21), which is translated by the said authors thus By transcendental meditation and pious acts the vigilant seeker of truth realizes the all-pervading God within the innermost cavity, the supreme abode of the Lord His three strides intimate His universal character, especially as the world itself is tripartite

And yet there are only few hymns addressed to him in the Veda Notwithstanding this his personality is by no means less important Macdonell remarks—"The deity occupies a subordinate position in the Rv being celebrated in only five or six hymns The central feature of his nature consists in his three steps, connected with which are his exclusive epithets 'vide-going'

(uru-gāya) and 'wide-striding' (uru-krama) (Vide A Vedic Reader for Students) This view is accepted by many commentators of Veda

Śrī R G Bhandarkar remarks that Visnu's personality is no less important in spite of a few hymns alone being addressed to Him, in the Veda He says that the long strides Visnu takes and the three steps by which He measures the universe, are always described with enthusiastic spirit In the third step of Visṇu there is a spring of honey (I 154 5)—(Vedic Mythological Tracts by R.N Dandekar p 78) The wise see the highest place of Visnu (paramam padam) as it were an eye fixed in heaven (I 22 20) The devotees desire to reach the vastness of that step where Viṣnu, Himself becomes a friend and His 'paramam padam' is itself immortality The highest step is indicative of its being the hīghest heaven (I 154 6), Visnu is said to be the comrade of Indra (I 22 19)—"indrasya yujyah sakhā"

Śrī Bhandarkar continues to state· "Visnu however in spite of His comparatively subordinate position in RV . began to rise in importance in the time of the Brāhmanas, while during the epic and paurānika period He rose to the rank of the supreme spirit The moment, which seems to have been in operation during this process of elevation, was reverence for the third step or the mysterious highest abode of Visnu beyond the ken of all In the Brahmanic period we have the mention of Agni as the lowest of the gods and Visnu as the highest (A B 1 1) Then we have a story in Śatapatha Brāhmana and Taittirīya Āranyaka of a sacrificial session held by the gods for the attainment of splendour, glory and food They proposed to themselves that he, amongst them, who by his deeds reached the end of the sacrifice before the others should attain the highest place among them all Visnu reached the end before the others and he thus became the highest of the gods and therefore they say that Visnu is the highest of the gods (S B XIV 1 1) When this was written Visnu had already attained to the supreme dignity and the story is invented to account for it (The collected works of Śrī R G Bhandarkar Vol IV p 47)

"Keith is no doubt right in observing" says Goyal in Religious History of Ancient India Vol 2 p.158, "that denying to Visnu the position of a great god in the period of Ṛ̣V would be to forget that the comparative importance of the various gods is not necessarily fully brought out in the text. Ruben also suggests that Visṇu became a great god in post vedic times because a deity of his characteristic functions was already important in pre-Aryan* India. But even then it can hardly be denied that in the ṚV. Visnu is concerned with sacrifice than devotion and does not belong to the category of the great deities. He was not regarded by anybody as the greatest God. His inferiority to Indra appears even in the Sūktas devoted to his glorification In ṚV I 22.19 his greatness rests on his being a worthy friend of Indra—"indrasya yujyah sakhā". Here Indra represents mere activity, and Viṣṇu is a true friend of the active Goyal remarks that Viṣnu was not an important deity in the early Vedic age (ibid p 157)

According to Dandekar, "Hymns in praise of Viṣnu are indeed very few; He is celebrated in not more than five whole hymns and in parts of others, while his name occurs only about a hundred times in the Rgveda (RV) Even in those stray passages, Visṇu is very casually mentioned among a crowd of other divinities He thus seems to have occupied a comparatively subordinate position in the pantheon of Vedic gods, from which he rose , more or less suddenly to supreme eminence in Hindu mythology Of all the Vedic gods, Visṇu is perhaps the only god whose name is prominently preserved in the Hindu Trinity " Dandekar thinks that a workable hypothesis in this connection, can be that there had been some elements in the original nature and personality of Visnu which, at one time ensured his position as an all important god but that these elements were suppressed, perhaps consciously, by the Vedic poets and priests Visnu must have been a highly worshipped God even in very ancient time, but He must have been deliberately shoved into the back ground in the Vedic religion on account of some intrinsic characteristics of his

* Really speaking there was no period as pre-Aryan in India

—*Editor*

essential nature which might have been disagreeable to the Vedic religious ideology. Does the available Vedic evidence corroborate this hypothesis to any extent ? He asks (ibid p 69). This is more or less speculative in character and refers to an effort to represent mere possibilities as certainty or even as a hypothesis which must be distrusted

Indra was by far the most invoked god of the Vedic Indians "If religious dignity and recognition had to be specially granted to any particular god, it was the practice of the Vedic poets to do so by associating that god with Indra and his fight with Vrtra That made the god so to say a 'legitimate' member of the Vedic pantheon This seems to have been the purpose of the obviously loose and artificial connection of the Visnu mythology with Indra-mythology (ibid p 71) After examining further, Dandekar concludes "All these phases indicate that there was no definite view point held by the Vedic poets regarding the mutual relationship between Indra and Visnu It was more or less in a fluid condition ! It may be suggested in this connection that Visnu belonged to and was glorified by some circles outside the orthodox families of the Vedic poets The artificial bringing together of Visnu and Indra may then be said to be the result of the efforts made on mythological plane to establish some kind of understanding between the respective worshippers of these two gods This would explain the obvious awkwardness felt by the Vedic poets in this connection The followers of the Visnu religion wanted to invest their god with the necessary religious dignity by associating him with the 'official' national god, Indra Not only that but they even tried to make Visnu supersede Indra It is of course not possible to accept the suggestion that the coalescence of the Visnu-religion with the Indra-religion reflected that of the Brāhmanas with the Ksatriyas Two other more reasonable explanations of this phenomenon may be offered Either Visnu was a very important god of the indigenous tribes of India and was, therefore, not readily accepted by the Vedic Aryans at the time of the fusion of the two cultures Or—and this is surely more likely—Visnu was a god of great eminence among

the masses of Aryan nomads themselves and was not partıcularly lıked by the Orthodox famılıes of the Vedic poets, perhaps on account of some 'revoltıng' traıts ın the prımary nature of that god Any way the foregoing analytıcal examınatıon of Vısnu's assocıatıon wıth Indra gıves us the necessary startıng poınt for the dıscussıon of the problem of Vısnu's true personalıty "

The three strides of Vısnu form a more ınherent feature of the Vısnu-mythology After examınıng thıs feature, Dandekar comes to the conclusıon that the evıdence supplıed by the RV and the later lıterature ıs suffıcıent to warrant that at the back of the Vedıc representatıon of Vısnu, there lıes maınly the conceptıon of the sun-god But he says that the evıdence as a whole ıs not suffıcıent to ıdentıfy Vısṇu's three steps with the rısing, the culmınation and the settıng of the Sun Accordıng to Oldenberg "every defınıte trace of solar character ıs lackıng ın Vısnu, that He was from the begınnıng conceıved only a traverser of wıde space and that no concrete natural conceptıon corresponds to the three steps" (vıde Vısṇu ın the Purāṇas by Bharadwaȷ, p. 75)

In a Rg Vedıc passage, Vıṣṇu ıs called the germ of 'Order' or 'sacrıfice'—'rtasya garbham' (I 156 3) Bharadwaȷ translates ıt as 'truthful' Hıs three strides, two called earthly and one the hıghest known only to Hımself (I 155.5) are Hıs most ımportant feet, Vısnu's hıghest place or the hıghest heaven ıs the realm of the departed souls and the abode of the pıous devotees (I 155.5-6, V 3 3, X 154) where He hımself dwells In Taıttırīya Samhıtā (I 7 5 4) ın Vāȷasaneyı Samhıtā I 30, II 6—8 V 21) ın Atharva Veda (V 26 7, VIII 5.10 etc) Vısnu ıs referred to as the Chief of the Gods-"*Vısnu Mukhā devāh*" (vıde Indıan Phılosophy Vol. II p 536 by Das Gupta) Śatapatha Brāhmana (XIV.1) calls Vıṣṇu as the best of all gods and says that He was regarded as beıng superıor to them all—*tasmād āhur Vıṣṇur devānām Śresṭhah* 'Vısnu ıs descrıbed as possessıng *brhatśarīra* 'great ın body' He ıs descrıbed as young even when he ıs so ancıent *(Yah pūrvyāya ved-hase navīyase sumaȷȷānaye*। *Vısnave dadāśatı* (I 156 2) "The flow of mead ıs ındıcated ın Hıs" "Locus Dıvıne"-*vısnoh pade parame madhva utsah* (I 154 5). He also figures as the leader

in battle He is specially praised with Indra, the two being looked upon as Rulers of the world (VI.69; VII 99) He is said to have created the Sun, the dawn and the fire-*Janayanta Sūryamusasamagnim* (VII.99.4). He has blissful spouse *(sumaj-jānaye viṣṇave dadāśati* (I 156.2). He comes to us whenever invoked i.e. coming at the response to the invitation of devotees. *(pratyetyāhavam* I 155 6) He is non-destroyer (Yaj.V *na-randhusah* 8.55). He is the Lord (*inasya* I 155.4), He is the benefactor of humanity-*(naryam* I.155.4); protector-Trātuh (I.155.4), He is bountiful- (mīlhuṣaḥ I 155.4), He is *Vrṣnaḥ*—fulfiller of desires (I 154 4); He is mighty *(tavīyān)-tavasastavīyān* (VII.100.3); He is invincible-*adābhyah* (I 155 1); He is non-injurious *(a-vrka)—avṛkasya* (I 155 4). He is non-killer *(a-ghnat)-aghnate visnave* (VIII 25.12), He is the saviour of embryos *(nisiktapa)-visnum nisiktapam* (VII.36 9); and adorable *(mah)-mahaḥ* (I 156 3), His form is extensive *(paromātrayā tanvā vrdhāna* (VII 99 1); He has upheld the sky and the earth, as well as all the regions—*yo- askabhā-yaduttaram sadhastham yah pārthivāni vimame rajāmsi* (I 154.1), He has propped up not only the horizon but also the high and spacious heaven—*vyastabhnā rodasī visnavete* (VII.99 3), In Rg V (Rkpariśista) His conch, disc and mace are referred to (7,5,28). Yaj V says that He is the self-born Lord and resides in the Ocean (13-63), He who watches from the Supreme Heaven (paramam padam)-X 129 7 *Yo' syādhyaksah parame vyoman* "The passage *ksayantamasya rajasah parāke* (VII.100 5) unambiguously show that Visnu is residing beyond 'rajas' Rajas represents prakṛti as a whole which consists of the three gunas inasmuch as sattva, rajas and tamas always co-existent" Says Bharadwaj His greatness is inconceivable (VII 99 1, 100 5,6) Visnu is enveloping the earth on all sides with his mayūkhas i e rays of light He continues "A hymn on Visnu in the Rg Veda (I 156) eulogises the Deity as Creator (VEDHAS)—*yah pūrvyāya vedhase navīyase*, and another one (VII 99) tells us that He created the Sun the dawn and the fire—*janayanta sūryamusasamagnim* (VII 99 4) The hymn of Purusa in the same scripture with which Visnu is traditionally adored reveals that the earth and the sky along with many other

things in between them were created by Him (Visnu). See Visnu in Purāṇas by Bharadwaj p.116. His greatness is described as inconceivable and He is revered under the title of 'śipivista' (VII.100.5), literally meaning 'bald'. Durgācārya explains the word as 'surrounded in the early rays'—Śipi-*SAMJÑAIR BĀLA RAŚMIBHIR ĀVISṬA*-Nirukta (V 9): cited in Das Gupta's, Indian Philosophy Vol. II,p.535. Some others have interpreted the word to mean, 'clothed in the rays of light ' According to Dandekar the Vaidika poets evidently sought to make a guarded casual reference to that aspect of Visnu's personality which was indicated by the word *'śipivisṭa'* "Many attempts have been made to explain that word but with little success and they do not conform to the requirements of philology as to bring about Viṣnu's true nature" He says "It is not possible to separate philologically the word *śipa* (=male organ of generation) from *śipi* Other similar IE forms are *śipha* (a root), pkt *chepa* lat *cippus, scipio* (=staff), etc Even Nirukta (V 7) seems to be vaguely supporting the view though its further explanation is not clear. Added to that word is a form from the root *vis* Thus making the whole word mean 'the changing phallus' We may now easily understand why the Vaidika poets speak in such guarded and obscure way about this form of Visnu. It is also significant that Aupamanyava (Nirukta V 7) says of this name of Viṣṇu, *kutsitārthīyam pūrvaṁ bhavati* , the word *śipivista* has thus unmistakably preserved Viṣnu's phallic nature There are also many other incidental references to Visnu in the Vaidika hymn and rituals which clearly associate him with the notions of fertility, productivity and sex-life (Vedic Mythological Tracts p 85-86) He further adds that the RV mantra *viṣnuryoniṁ kalpayatu* (X 184 1) accompanies garbha ceremony, thus suggesting that Viṣnu is efficacious protector of the embryos The word *paumsya*-'manly vigour' is significantly used with reference to Visnu in the RV (I 155 3,4) Dandekar thus feels that the Vaidika poets and priests made a purposeful attempt, to suppress Visnu's essential aspect This to me seems, could hardly be a ground for suppressing the important personality of Visnu

The *Vrsākapı* hymn (X 86) has a specıal sıgnıficance ın the Veda, ın that ıt forms part of the process of cosmogony, the process of creatıon ın the plant world, anımal kıngdom, human and the entıre cosmos In all thıs attempt ıs made to relate *sat* wıth *asat*. J A B Van Buıtenan poses thıs questıon thus ın Rāmānuja's Vedānta Sangraha pages 4&5 "The earlıest form—but not necessarıly the most prımıtıve one—of the questıon of the provenance of 'thıs which ıs' found ın the Rgveda (10 72), ıt ıs asked how the gods come to be The poet descrıbes how Brahmanaspatı forged these words as a blacksmıth ! for, ın the age before gods *sat* orıgınated the worlds (cf X 129 6) The sequel shows that the poet had other probably more congenıal cosmogonıc assocıatıon ın mınd where Daksa and Adıtı were the prımeval progenıtors from whom the world was born The relatıon between *sat* and the personalıty of Brahmanaspatı, who somehow assısted at ıts orıgınatıon remaıns obscure Hıs personalıty remınds us of RV (X 81) where creatıon ıs descrıbed as the handıwork of the dıvıne artısan Vıśvakarmā, who sıgnıficantly ıs called Vācaspatı In thıs Sūkta the questıon ıs posed· what ıs the foundatıon, what the foot-hold on whıch Vıśvakarmā created, and agaın, seek wıth your mınds, O sages, for that on whıch he stood whıle supportıng the worlds ? Thıs questıon ıs, ıt would seem, dırectly answered ın RV (X 129), the sages found out that *sat* ıs fastened to *asat* "

Thıs shows that *sat* arıses from *asat*, more than that the personalıty behınd both—the Brahmanaspatı and Vıśvakarmā who are succeeded by a vague and anonymous *Adhyaksa* or superintendıng person Even hıs orıgınatıon beıng questıoned a personal agency behınd the creatıon of thıs world wıll remaın connected wıth the questıon of the relatıon between *sat* and *asat*

Van Buıtenan says "the latter relatıon ıs expressed ın thıs sūkta ın the terms of conceptıon and procreatıon ın the womb of *asat*, the dark hidden wıth ın the dark ın whıch the embryonıc water was as yet 'unaccıdented', the one first one embryo (ābhu) ıs conceıved wıth an excess of heat-orgasm, the procreatıve ımpulse (kāma) takes shape ın that germ whıch ıs the first germ of wıll

(manas), sages found out that this *sat* is fastened to *asat*— and one is inclined to add with the omphalical chord This intimate connection between that which is *sat* and that which is not *sat* enables us to understand the somewhat enigmatic beginning of the hymn: *asat*" another than *sat* is there only to account for *sat's origin* and has no proper existence apart from *sat*, so that before sat came to be, its counterpart was not there either, it is rightly said that originally there was absolutely nothing neither *sat* or this which is here, nor another than this *Asat* the other, the womb from which *sat* arises, has been completely abstracted from a primeval progenitrix; a reminiscence of a progenitor persists though his function is questioned and he is atmost if at all, some one watching the process from the far away sky (ibid pages 5 and 6)

The inventory of the world shows, says Van Buitenan, three 'aspects' (rupa-"colour, coloured form") of *tejas* "glowing heat", *āpah* "water", *anna* "grown food" These three aspects form successive off-spring of what is called *sat* All the beings that in their turn went forth, from the deities which are these 'aspects' These three aspects sum up the entire world (vide ibid p 7)

The procreative aspect took shape in that which became the first seed of *manas* (which is nearer to 'will' than 'thought')—the will to create personified as the first self-created creature The embryo which was conceived by an excess of heat (tapas) in the formerly unaccidented water was the germ in which the primary creative impulse took shape, an order kāma-tapas-water-conceived germ presents itself clearly These succeeding events are moments in the causal series proceeding from *sat's* first impulse *sat* desires to multiply and *tejas* appears after and through *tejas* water, and through water the fruit *(anna)* (ibid p 9)

Van Buitenan now asks how does the definitive birth of the new completely conceived *sat* proceed ? To each of its constitutive 'elements' correspond a mode of birth to *tejas* that of the brooded egg, to water that of the living being born in embryonic liquid, to *anna* that of a plant So naturally the next sentence reads I will now make separate names and forms (i e start creation proper) by entering the three deities as *living being*

myself The three constitutive events of conception elaborated as separated moments of a causal series are now again condensed and integralized and it is *sat* not *anna* which starts creation. by being born in the manner of a living being itself (ibid p 10).

The attempt of the Vaidika Rsis in RV (X 86) is to equate Viṣṇu to adhisthāna in the act of procreation There is nothing obscene or derogatory to the status of Visnu as the highest deity The linking of Viṣṇu to RV (X 86), would only enhance his importance, for but for him nothing would happen. For the Rṣis of yore, sex-desire is only as good as any other desire (Br Up. IV 4.22)

Ṛgv (I 155.4) has been translated by Swāmī Satyaprakāśa Saraswatī and Satyakāma Vidyālaṅkāra thus:

"These offerings increase the virility of this son, which He then establishes between the two mothers (earth and Heaven) for generation and gratification, just as the sun has the inferior and superior and a third (middle) appellations of the father, similarly the sun establishes its effulgence in the celestial space (3).

Therefore we celebrate the virility of this (sun) who is powerful and foe-less and who is a gracious saviour and who traverses widely the interspace above the earth in three consecutive paces so that the world may live with its full existence." (4)

If this is accepted then the 'virility' spoken of by Dandekar, is one that flows from the energy of the sun and not Visnu

"The Vrsākapi hymn in RV (X 86) has aroused serious controversies regarding its interpretation "says Dandekar Without going into the detail of that controversy one may say that, broadly speaking that hymn describes how, when Indra felt greatly exhausted, a bold lascivious monkey administered to him some medicine and how as a result of it, Indra regained his manly power This *Vrṣākapi* is identified in later literature, with Viṣṇu, the word being also mentioned as one of his names in the *Visnusahasranāma-stotra* There is thus abundant indirect evidence provided by the Vaidika hymns and ritual to prove Visnu's connection with fertility and productivity rites. Dandekar says that Visnu was primarily the fertility-bird All this explains according to him how Viṣṇu as a god of fertility must have

occupied a prominent position in the primitive Aryan religious thought, and ritual Other so called obscure references to Viṣnu such as *śipivista* agree perfectly well with this aspect of Visnu's personality (see ibid p.88) In Visnu *Sahasranāma,* the word *Vrsākapi* is interpreted to mean Varāha, the Dharma incarnate According to Śankara, Dharma is called *Vrsah* as it rains all desires and '*Ka*' stands for water He protected, lifted the earth as Varāha So he is called *kapih* He is called *Vrsākapih* as He is of the form of *Vrsa* and *kapi*—vide Mahābhārata (Śānti 342-89) *Kapirvarāhah śresthaśca Dharmaśca vrsa ucyate tasmāt vrsākapim prāha kaśyapo mām prajāpatih* 'Kaśyapa Prajāpati called Me Vrsākapi as *kapi* to mean the big boar and dharma is said to be *vrsa* (see 'Śrī Visnusahasranāma Stotram'-by Śankara Nārāy-anan (p 69) Sankara interprets the word 'Śipivista' thus 1 *Śipis* are the sacrificial animals He enters *(Visati)* into them in the form of the sacrifice So *śipivistah* vide the Śruti *Yajño vai visnuh paśavah śipih yajña eva paśusupratitisthati* verily the sacrifice in Visnu· the sacrificial animals are the śipih and Visnu alone indwells in them (Taitt Sam 2 5 5) or 2 Śipis are rays· one who has entered into them is Śipivistaḥ i e He dwells in the rays of light

By the combination of coolness and fitness to be rested in, the water is seen to be refreshing By drinking and keeping them (in themselves) *śipis* are considered to be rays As the Lord of the universe has entered into them, He is said to be *śipivistah* (ibid p 93)

Parāśara in his Bhāsya of Sahasranāmastotra interprets the word '*Śipivistah*' to mean 'He who pervades the rays' '*Śipi*' means rays and '*vistah*' means has entered He has pervaded all the rays He quotes Yāska saying that in his Nirukta *"śipayah* are said to signify the 'rays' and they have entered into Him" He says that there is also similar interpretation by the ancient sages "The meaning of the word '*Śipi-vista*' is He has tawny hairs on His body, with that body He has pervaded all other things So He is *Śipi-vista* ! In the Udyogaparva (Mahābhārata), That is *Śipivista* which enters into the pores of the body like the rays of the sun " "Thy powerful rays are filling the whole Universe and are burning

it (Śrī Visnu Sahasranāma with Bhāsya of Śrī Parāśara Bhattār p 342)

Again the word *Vrsā-kapi* is interpreted by Parāśara Bhattār to mean, Varāha, the Dharma Incarnate He says 'It is being declared that Acyuta is no other than the Dharma Varāha Such is the etymology given by the ancient seers,

'Kapi' is the sublime Varāha and Vrsā is Dharma. Therefore I am *Vrsākapi* Kaśyapa the Prajāpati (the secondary creator) declared about me thus (ibid page 233)

This view of giving secondary place of importance to Visnu, has not been accepted by Aurobindo, T V Kapālī Śāstrī and even by the Ācāryas According to Aurobindo, it was a view long popularised by European scholars that the greatness of Viṣṇu and Śiva in the Purānic theogonies was a later development and that in the Veda these gods have a quite minor position and are inferior to Indra and Agni This arises inevitably as a part of total misunderstanding of Vaidika thought for which old Brahmanic ritualism is responsible and to which European scholarship by the exaggeration of a minor and external element in the Vaidika mythology has only given and yet more misleading form. "The importance of the Vaidika god" says Aurobindo has not to be measured by the number of hymns devoted to them or by the extent to which they are invoked in the thoughts of the Rsis, but by the functions which they perform Agni and Indra to which the majority of the Vaidika hymns are addressed are not greater than Visnu and Rudra, but the functions which they fulfil in the internal and external world were the most active, dominant and directly effective for the psychological discipline of the ancient Mystics, this alone is the reason for their predominance . On the other hand Visnu, Rudra,-Brahmaṇaspati, the Vaidika originals of the latter Puranic Triad, Visnu-Śiva-Brahmā provide the conditions of the Vaidika work and assist it from behind the more present and active gods, but are less close to it and in appearance less continually concerned in its daily movements " (The Secret of the Vedas by Aurobindo p 333-334)

Aurobindo continues and illustrates his point thus: "For the

formations of Brahmanaspati word for the actions of Rudra's force, Visṇu supplies the necessary static elements— Space, the ordered movements of the worlds, the ascending levels, the highest goal He has taken three strides and in the space created by the three strides has established all the worlds," The 'many' to the 'one' This latter triad which is often misinterpreted as suggesting monotheism "To the Rsis there was only universal Deva (Ekam) of whom Visnu, Rudra, Brahmanspati, Agni, Indra, Vāyu, Mitra, Varuna are all alike forms and cosmic aspects " In the emergence of the idea of the supreme and only Deva, in the Upanisadic period, left in the Rks vague and undefined the ritualistic limitation of other gods and with growing theology, these lesser gods were left out, and Brahmā, Visnu, Rudra emerged as the Trinity of Hindu Theogony

The greatness of the strides of Visnu is celebrated in the Hymn, addressed to Him, and these three steps are stated to be, as earth, heaven and the triple principle of tridhātu 'It is this triple principle beyond Heaven or superimposed upon it as its highest level *nākasya prsthe* (I 125 5) which is the Supreme abode of the all-pervading deity '

The earth, the lower seat, the vital world the middle heaven, the higher—all these are covered by the three steps of Visnu He is the wide moving one who has gone "abroad"—as it is put in the language of Īsa, Upa 8—*Sa paryagāt,* triply extending himself as Seer, Thinker and Former in the super conscient Bliss in the heaven of mind, in the earth of the physical conciouness The three steps support, the vital, the mental and the beyond, the transcendent Or they may be considered as his three kinds of Śakti–the *para* or ultimate, the *apara*, identical within individual efforts, and the third is called Vidyā and Karma It is through these energies that all living beings are moved into activity

In I 154 3, Veda states, that Visnu alone measured the three steps. Zimmer in his Philosophies of India observes at p.350 '*Nescience* might be called short-leggedness of man in contrast to the reach of the divine cosmic Man Visnu who with three gigantic strides created, Earth. Atmosphere and Firmament simply by

setting down the sole of his feet at each stride in what was simply empty space

The progress of the human soul is compared to a journey and the end of the path which one traverses and reaches is called the highest place of Visnu (paramam padam).This final goal and the abode of eternal bliss indicates the raising of Visnu to the dignity of Supreme Being Thus at the beginning of the daily prayer hymns of the Brāhmanas known as Sandhyā, it is said that the wise always see that superior place of Visnu like the open eye in the sky *tad Viṣṇoh paramam padam sadā paśyanti sūrayaḥ divīva caksurātatam* (see Das Gupta's Indian Philosophy Vol II p 536)

Zimmer continues "He who lacks the proper intuitive awareness and is thoughtless and impure does not reach that place (pada· the state of transcendental existence) he tips over into the whirlpool of death and rebirth (saṁsāra) But he who is full of intuitive awareness thoughful and pure at all times, reaches That Place whence one is not reborn The man who has for his charioteer intuitive awareness and for his bridle the mind, attains the end of his journey—which is a great distance away That goal is the supreme abode of Viṣṇu (the Cosmic all pervading Self divine)

Visnu's celestial paradise which is situated in the upper surface of the dome of the firmament and is known as his "third step" because it came into existence beneath his foot with the third of his three gigantic cosmic strides, symbolizes the state of that one who as an accomplished initiate has become realeased from bondage and has been made divine through the realization of his own intrinsic spirituality Once having broken through the shrouding veils to the self by virtue of a conquest of forces of nature, in his own organism the chariot rider is no longer involved in worldly sufferings, pleasures, and pursuits but has become now and ever free" (ibid pages 365-366)

The Ṛsis invoke the powers of Agni and Indra so often in the Vedas, because they are of constant and immediate consequence, in the psychological and spiritual discipline of these mystics and hence their improtance and not because they are superior to the

Sun; similarly Maruts, children of Rudra are not greater than their Father, though there are more hymns addressed to them than Rudra in the *Rg Veda*. The same may be said of Visnu and Rudra to whom lesser number of hymns are devoted and yet Indra and Agni are not greater than they (See Further lights on Veda by T V Kapālī Śāstrī p 31)

Some critics of Veda, have interpreted the three steps of Visnu, as the movement of the sun in the sky They say that the highest step is not the Supreme abode of Visnu, but the highest step which is the meridian and that Visnu is the sun Śāstrī asks "How can the wise see him always, *sadā* ?" If it is the sun in the physical universe that is seen then it cannot be seen always in the meridian Nor can it be said that the wise alone see him always in the meridian who is not so visible to others who are not wise It will then be absurd and fanciful or it must be the invisible sun, not the physical one, who is always visible in his Supreme Abode, to the eye of the Wise (see ibid p 7,8) It is because of its uncommon character that the Supreme abode is said to be always seen by the Wise like an eye fully extended in the heaven Swamī Satyaprakāśa Saraswatī and Satyakāma Vidyālankāra translate the verse The wise and true seekers realise God through meditation within their own self, they see Him vividly as the eye ranges over the sky No one sees the sun in the meridian with his naked eye but only with a Special instrument, even when the sun as such is visible daily Likewise, the effulgence of Visnu cannot be seen by the naked eye but only with the aid of Indra, the mind power and intuitively which acts as the special instrument for seeing Viṣṇu Indra is a friend of Visnu, and it is through a friend that the Supreme Being, Visnu is approached—In X 66 5 where the nature of other gods is indicated by their characterstics, Visnu is called 'great' or 'majestic' In VII 9, it is said of Visnu that those who have been born or those who shall be born cannot know the end of the majesty of Visnu In X 191 2 the final Rk of the Veda we are enjoined to pay obeiscence to the great Viṣṇu-'namo Visnave mahate Karomi' He is entrusted with the work of deliverance of man from distress VI 49 13

Thus we see that the various perspectives stem from the same hymns and verses, but their approach in their understanding differs In one case they read the verses as they appear on their face, while in the other those interpreters read a secret meaning which they say as the secret of the Vedas

(to be continued)



Essentials of Vrata—

Hemādri cites a passage from *Varāhapurāna* (I p 321) indicating the mental and physical conditions of a proper performance of a *vrata* These are *ahimsā, satyam, asteyam, brahmacarya, akalmasam* constituting the mental conditions, and a single meal for the day (*ekabhukta*), a single meal taken at night only for a day (*naktam*) and complete fast on the day of the vrata(*upavāsa*) are the physical essentials of a *vrata* The person who does a *vrata* must be pure in body and mind, and take his usual bath, and in some cases take three baths in the day. The *naktam* (partial) starvation with food taken only at night is to be on the day prior to the *vrata*, and the single day-meal (*ekabhukta*) on the day prior to it The time for taking the night-food is described by some authorities as two muhūrtas before sunset, and by others as after the stars are visible, i e well after sunset A *vratin* should not eat on the fast day, sleep by day, gamble or have sexual intercourse He should not have an oil bath In most *vratas*, food with salt or oil must be avoided The *vratin* should ordinarily sleep on the ground and eat on the floor, He should control his emotions, be calm, and perform his daily obligatory rites In some *vratas* the reading of the *Rāmāyana* is recommended (p 46)

—Krtyakalpataru

They who fix their mind on the lotus feet of Śrī Krsna, being attracted by His divine qualities, are absolved of sins They no longer see the messengers of Death, noose in hand, even in a dream

—Bhāgavata (VI 1 19)



Pīpala Tree—the very Image of Lord Viṣṇu

The scriptures speak very highly of Aśvattha (the holy fig tree) The Skanda-Purāna says—

मूले विष्णुः स्थितो नित्यं स्कन्धे केशव एव च।
नारायणस्तु शाखासु पत्रेषु भगवान् हरिः॥
फलेऽच्युतो न सन्देहः सर्वदेवैः समन्वितः।
स एव विष्णुर्द्रुम एव मूर्तो महात्मभिः सेवितपुण्यमूलः।
यस्याश्रयः पापसहस्रहन्ता भवेन्नृणां कामदुघो गुणाढ्यः॥

(Skanda-Purāna Nāgara Khanda 247/41,42,44)

'In the root of the Pīpala (the holy fig tree) resides Viṣnu, in the trunk Keśava, in the branches, Nārāyana, in the leaves, Lord Hari and in the fruits, abides Acyuta (undecaying) with all the gods There is not the least doubt about it This is Visnu Himself appearing in a concrete form, exalted souls worship the sacred root of this tree Dependence on this tree wipes out thousands of men's sins, grants their prayers and bestows merits '

In the 26th verse of the tenth chapter of the Gītā entitled 'The yoga of Divine Glories' by saying 'अश्वत्थ सर्ववृक्षाणाम्' the Lord declares that Pīpala tree is the sovereign among all the trees It is worthy of adoration God has declared it as his own Manifestation This is why the cutting of Pīpala trees is forbidden by Scriptures Pīpala ought to be worshipped and watered by one aspiring the compassion of Lord Visnu

—Adapted from 'Kalyana'



Vaiṣṇava Saints of Northern & Southern India

Dhruva in Meditation—

After receiving initiation from Devarsi Nārada, Dhruva came to Madhuvana on the bank of the Jamunā and started meditation on the Lord together with mental repetition of the sacred formula of twelve letters, "*Oṁ Namo Bhagavate Vāsudevāya*" Devarsi Nārada described to Dhruva the Form of the Lord as follows: "Contemplate on Śrī Hari as one disposed to show favour His face and eyes are always graciously cheerful, He has a well-shaped nose and eyebrows and charming cheeks, He is the most fascinating among the gods, youthful, beautiful in every limb, with rosy lips and eyes He is the one resort of all suppliants, the one dispenser of happiness, the ocean of mercy He is distinguished by the mark of Śrīvatsa, blue like a cloud, having a perfect human form, bearing the wreath of Vanamālā, with His four arms distinguished with Śankha, Cakra, Gadā and Padma He is adorned with a crown, ear-rings, armlets and bracelets His neck adds grace to the Kaustubha gem and He is dressed in silks of golden colour and adorned with the ornamental zone about His middle and with brilliant anklets of gold He is most beautiful, the delighter of the mind and eyes, enthroned in the seed-stock of the lotus called the heart of those that worship Him."

Dhruva bathed in the Jamunā and fasted that night Then, with a concentrated mind, he started his worship of the Perfect Being according to the instructions of the sage. At the end of every three nights he ate the fruits known as Kapittha and Badara, just enough to maintain the body, and thus spent a month in worshipping Hari The second month, he subsisted on withered grass, leaves and such other things taking them once every sixth day The third month he subsisted on water drunk every ninth day

The fourth month he subsisted on air and when the fifth month came, the royal child who had controlled his breath stood motionless like a post on one foot meditating on Brahma. Having withdrawn his thoughts and senses from every object, he perceived nothing else This meditation of the Lord performed by Dhruva made the three worlds shake, the earth pressed down by his toe became half inclined, and the worlds with their guardian deities, being unable to breathe properly, began to feel distressed Thereupon, the gods approached Śrī Hari and sought protection from Him, and the Lord eager to see His devoted servant came to Madhuvana riding on the back of Garuda and revealed Himself before Dhruva

Śrī Viṣṇucitta—

One of the twenty famous Ālvārs of South India, Śrī Visnucitta came of a Brāhmana family at Srivilliputur in the Tinnevelly district His father's name was Mukundācārya and his mother's name was Padmā As a devotee of Nārāyana, Visnucitta gave himself up to the service of God even from his childhood and spent his time muttering the Lord's name and raising a flower-garden for offering flowers and garlands to the Lord Leading a quiet life in a corner of his garden, he was quite unconcerned about the world But the Lord desired to spread his glory, so one night appearing before him in a dream, the Lord said, "Awake, Visnucitta, start at once for Madura, where king Baladeva is holding a parliament of Religions. Maintain My glory there. Raise aloft the standard of Bhakti and prove to the assembly that Viśistādvaita is the true path to Bliss "Though not a master of Śāstras, Visnucitta started for Madura as directed by the Lord and through the grace of God succeeded in establishing the supremacy of the Bhakti cult The king fell at the feet of Visnucitta, accepted him as his guru, organized a grand procession to commemorate the holy day when the Truth of Nārāyana was revealed to all Placing Viṣnucitta on the golden *howdah* of the State elephant, the procession proceeded followed by the multitude, which roared like the waves of the ocean *"Om Namo Nārāyanāya "* The famous Vaisnava Anthem of the South,

the *Pallandu* came out of Viṣṇucitta's inspired lips during this procession and has remained ever since a source of inspiration to all Vaiṣṇavas in the South.

Śri Āṇḍāl—

Śrī Āndāl was brought up as a child by Visnucitta and imbibed from her foster-father the spirit of devotion to God of the highest order. On attaining maturity, she began to offer her love to god as the Gopīs offered their love to Śrī Kṛṣṇa The sentiment of Madhura-Bhāva which Āṇḍāl expressed towards the Lord through her poems and songs reached its culmination when she was given over to Lord Ranganātha as His bride under the direction of the Lord Himself Palanquins and all the paraphernalia of a marriage procession came from Śrīrangam to take Āndāl and her foster-father to the temple of Śrī Ranganātha 'Drums beat, conchs are blown, the holy ones chant their Mantras; the bards sing, Bhaktas hail glory to Āndāl, glory to Śrī Ranga ! Āṇḍāl in the rapturous ecstasy of self-identification enters the *sanctum sanctorum*. She enters the Śesa-Śayana Quick! A splendour everywhere ! Where is Āndāl? O, the Lover and the Beloved have become one !' Āndāl's mission in life was fulfilled and she became one with the Eternal Nārāyana who sent her here to show the world the glory of the cultivation of exclusive Love for God

Śrī Kulaśekhara—

He is another Ālvār saint whose name is familiar throughout the South Son of King Drdhavrata of Kerala, when Kulaśekhara came to the throne he is reported to have established Rāmarājya in his dominion and made the kingdom a true haven of wealth, wisdom and contentment Though he sat on the throne, his heart was given over to God One day while listening rapturously to the Rāmāyana, he heard the passage

चतुर्दश सहस्राणि रक्षसां भीमकर्मणाम् ।
एकश्च रामो धर्मात्मा कथं युद्धो भविष्यति ॥

"The fierce Rāksasas are fourteen thousand in number, and the righteous Rāma is single-handed, how will the battle go "

"Ah," exclaimed Kulaśekhara "you say righteous Rāma is single-handed, and how the battle will go ?" He at once blew the

clarion and collected a strong army "Rāma shall not go to battle unaided," he said As he was about to start with his army, he heard the passage which said that Rāma single-handed killed all the fourteen thousand Rākasasas Kulaśekhara heaved a sigh of relief He commanded the army to disperse, as Rāma had won the battle Such was Kulaśekhara, the royal saint, who is daily remembered by the Vaisnavas of the South

Śrī Vipranārāyaṇa—

The Ālvār Vipranārāyaṇa's life corroborates the declaration of the Lord made in the Gītā–"Even if the most sinful worships Me with exclusive devotion, he too should be accounted righteous, for he has rightly resolved " Vipranārāyana, a Brahmacārī, who had dedicated his life to the service of Śrī Ranganātha, was tricked by a young woman of ill-fame, who brought about his fall In his infatuation for the woman, Vipranārāyana wholly forgot himself for sometime, but his subsequent redemption gives us a beautiful illustration of the way of the Lord with His devotee. When Vipranārāyana lost all his resources in serving the woman, she began to be cold towards him, when eventlually one night she actually refused him entrance into her house Poor Vipra caught by the snare of the woman returned to his cottage wailing and writhing through excruciating mental torture At dead of night there was a knock at the gate of the woman's house When it was opened a stranger delivered to her a valuable gold plate in the name of Vipranārāyana Devadevī, the woman, now became profuse in her confession of Love for Vipranārāyana and asked the stranger to send him to her Thereupon the same stranger came to Vipranārāyana and sent him to her Who was this stranger, and wherefrom did he bring the plate ? Next morning, a hubbub was raised in the temple of Ranganātha when it was found that a gold plate was missing The matter was reported to the king who ordered the police to make a thorough enquiry The plate was discovered in the brothel of Devadevī and Vipranārāyana was arrested on the suspicion of having committed the theft The king wondered what punishment to award to Vipranārāyana, for the whole incident appeared to him to be shrouded in a mystery At

night the king dreamt Lord Ranganātha saying—"All this was done by Me to redeem My devotee. It was I who gave the plate to her. I am my devotee's servant Vipranārāyana is quite innocent Send him back to his garden to devote his life to My service " The king thanked the Lord and felt extremely sorry for having arrested a Bhakta and ordered immediate release of Vipranārāyana

Look at Vipranārāyaṇa after his release from prison ! The veil of *Māyā* has now fallen from his eyes With eyes full of tears and deep repentance in his heart he stands at the feet of Ranganātha and prayer flows from the bottom of his heart· "I was a wretch, a gambler, a thief, I associated with the vicious and was caught by the net of a woman's eyes Yet Thou hast saved me, O Raṅga Thou hast melted this iron heart Sinner as I am, O Lord, I shall not think of anything else except Thy grace. I shall not leave Thy feet again *I surrender myself, O Ranga, I surrender* myself to Thee, my only Saviour " The devotee was thus wholly restored to his Lord The woman Devadevī, also renounced all her property and began hence-forward to live the life of a humble devotee of Ranganātha

Śrī Munivāhana—

An outcaste by birth, Munivāhana received the honour of a saint from Lord Ranganātha Himself by dint of his selfless devotion to the Lord who ordered Sāraṅgamamuni to carry him on the shoulders and bring him before His holy presence in the *sanctum sanctorum* of the temple This is how the untouchable Bhakta, Tiruppan, came to be known as Munivāhana, one who was carried on the back by Sārangamamuni There in the *sanctum sanctorum*, the Ālvār stood choked with emotion, his body shining like a burning gem, and there he disappeared merging himself in the splendour of the Lord

Saroyogi, Bhutattālvār, Peyālvār—

These three Ālvārs were born at three different places in the South, but were brought together by an accident and obtained Divine vision together Though great as scholars, they possessed no attraction for name, fame or worldly pleasures They lived singing the glory of God and preaching the message of Divine

Love and surrender to the Lord

Kamban—

He was the prince of poets in the South and holds the same position in Tamil literature as is justly given to Goswāmī Tulasīdāsa in Hindi His wonderful *Rāmāyana* in Tamil has made his name immortal.

Mīrā Bāī—

Mīrā Bāī, woman though she is, occupies a very high place among the saints of Northern India The halo that has gathered round her head is of the brightest effulgence The hymns and lyrics composed and sung by her, breathe a spirit of uncommon devotion to the Almighty as conceived by her, and are still inspiring thousands of the religious-minded people of India. She was unflinching in her faith in her God, and bore, for His sake, the thousand and one persecutions she was subjected to Her life from first to last was one uniform act of surrender to her Divine Lord From the earliest dawn till late at night her one thought was Govindajī (or Giridhara Gopāla), whom she mystically regarded as her husband, and to whom she fancied she had been wedded she knew not when The image of Govindajī, which she had found established in her grandfather's house at Mertā, and which was worshipped with the greatest reverence in her family, had become familiar to her from her childhood The image had exercised such a silent influence on her young imagination that she ascribed to it all shades of greatness and goodness She regarded it as the fountain-head of all beauty, joy, knowledge, power and permanence In fact, to her imagination, He (the Spirit immanent in the image) was the only male entity in the universe, all others being forms of Prakrti or matter without independent permanent existence

Śrī Rāmānanda—

Śrī Rāmānanda was a prominent Vaisnava saint of Northern India The cult of Rāma-worship received a great impetus from him He was a disciple of Rāmānuja with whom he quarrelled and founded an independent sect Many saints of Northern India such as Goswāmī Tulasīdāsa and Kabīra were inspired by his teachings

Kabīra—

Kabīra was a disciple of Śrī Rāmānanda. He was an exponent of *Nirguṇa Bhakti* and wrote a number of Bhajanas which are very popular in Northern India He discarded all forms and was a vehement opponent of conventions which he ruthlessly criticised in his songs His cult which is known by the name of *Kabīra-Pantha* appealed to Hindus and Muslims alike and he was respected by both

Goswāmī Tulasīdāsa—

Goswāmī Tulasīdāsa is too well-known to require any introduction His popular and immortal work *"Rāmāyana"* has won for him an undying name and an honoured place among the world-poets He was a devotee of Śrī Rāma and wrote many other popular works connected with the life of Śrī Rāma His *Rāmāyāṇa* and *Vinaya-Patrikā* are regarded as master-pieces of Hindi poetry and two of the most shining gems of Hindi Literature He was another formidable exponent of the *Bhakti* School.

Śrī Jñāneśvara—

Śrī Jñāneśvara was another well-known figure in Mahārāṣṭra. He was a *Yogī* and a *Bhakta* and wrought a number of miracles. His commentary on the Gītā is held in great reverence.

Śrī Ekanātha—

Śrī Ekanātha was a great Vaiṣnava saint of Mahārāṣṭra He belonged to the Pandharpur school of Bhaktas and was a devotee of Śrī Viṭthala whose famous shrine at Paṇḍharpur attracts thousands of visitors every year even now. He was also a master scholar and wrote several works in Marāṭhī which are held in great esteem even to this day He lost all consciousness of the outer world when absorbed in meditation and the picture depicts one of such occassions when a huge cobra climbed on his body and coiled itself round his back.

Śrī Tukārāma—

Śrī Tukārāma was another outstanding figure in Mahārāstra He was Vaiśya by caste and a great devotee of Śrī Krsṇa. He has composed several verses in Marāṭhī which are very popular in

Mahārāṣṭra He was very fond of Kīrtana

Samartha Rāmadāsa—

Samartha Rāmadāsa was the guru of the famous Marāthā hero Śivājī He exercised a great influence over Śivājī and was to great extent responsible for moulding his character Śivājī held him in great esteem and invariably sought his advice in important matters He was a reputed saint of his time and a devotee of Śrī Rāma He is believed to be an incarnation of Śrī Hanumān, the Monkey-God

Śrī Caitanya Deva—

Śrī Caitanya Deva was an incarnation of Divine Love In the prime of his youth he renounced the world and dedicated his life to his beloved Lord Śrī Kṛsna He flooded the whole of Bengal with the ecstasy of Divine Love Wherever he went, the air resounded with the sweet sound of the Divine Names The followers of the Gaudīya school of *Bhakti* recognised him to be an incarnation of Śrī Krsna, nay, Śrī Krsna Himself. He is seen dancing in ecstatic joy and chanting the beautiful names of the Lord

Śrī Nimbārkācārya—

Nimbārkācārya was another prominent figure of the medieval times He was a Vaisnava saint and started a sect of his own His followers are worshippers of Śrī Krsna and Rādhā. The Philosophical Doctrine preached by him is known by the name of *Dvaitādvaita* (a sort of compromise between the *Dvaita* and the *Advaita* Doctrines)

Śrī Rāmānujācārya—

Śrī Rāmānujācārya was the founder of what is known as the Viśistādvaita School of Indian Philosophy The followers of his sect are known by the name of Śrī Vaisnavas He was a worshipper of Lord Visnu and the Bhakti movement received a great impetus from him He has a great following in India, especially in the Madras Presidency He also wrote learned commentaries on the *Gītā* and the *Brahma Sūtras,* which are very popular

Śrī Madhvācārya—

Śrī Madhvācārya was another outstanding genius of the

medieval times He was a powerful exponent of Dualism *(Dvaitavāda)* and a *Vaiṣṇava* Śrī Caitanya Deva was inspired by his teachings

Śrī Vallabhācārya—

Śrī Vallabhācārya was another Vaisnava saint who flourished in the 16th century A.D He was a devotee of Child Kṛṣṇa and gave a popular form of Kṛṣṇa-worship He wrote several works of which the gloss on the *Brahma Sūtras*, a commentary on *Śrīmad Bhāgavata*, known as the *Subodhinī* is the best known. He has a large following in Northern India and the sect founded by him has produced a number of celebrated saints and poets, Sūradāsa and Nandadāsa being the most prominent

Paramahaṁsa Rāmakṛṣṇa—

Paramahamsa Rāmakrsna was one of the greatest men of the modern times. He was a God-intoxicated man and a great devotee of Mother Kālī He exercised a great restraining influence on modern Bengal and produced a devoted band of missionaries who spread the cult of Vedānta in foreign countries, Swāmī Vivekānand being the foremost among them.

Swāmī Rāmatīrtha—

Swāmī Rāmatīrtha was another God-intoxicated man of the modern age In his early youth he became a Samnyāsī and preached the highest truths of *Vedānta* in a most appealing way His lectures were greatly appreciated in America

Śrī Viśuddhānanda Sarasvatī—

He was a celebrated saint and scholar of the modern times and lived at Benares A number of institutions at Calcutta and Benares owe their existence to him and have accordingly been named after him



The True Vaiṣṇava

वैष्णव जन तो तेने कहिए जे पीड पराई जाणे रे।
परदुःखे उपकार करे तोये, मन अभिमान न आणे रे ॥
सकल लोक माँ सहुने वंदे निंदा न करे केनी रे।
वाच काछ मन निश्चल राखे धन-धन जननी तेनी रे ॥
समदृष्टि ने तृष्णा त्यागी, परस्त्री जेने मात रे।
जिह्वा थकी असत्य न बोले परधन नव झाले हाथ रे ॥
मोह माया व्यापे नहिं जेने दृढ वैराग्य जेना मनमां रे।
राम नाम सु ताली लागी सकल तीरथ तेना तन मां रे ॥
वण लोभी ने कपट रहित घे, काम क्रोध निवार्या रे।
भणै नर सैयो तेनु दरसन करतॉं कुल एकोतेर तांर्या रे ॥

(Bhakta Narasī Mehatā)

The true Vaisnava is one, who feels the sufferings of others Those who are in distress he helps them, even then, he does not entertain any feeling of pride He praises all in this world and defames none He keeps his body, speech and mind always firm and pure Many many thanks for his mother He gave up all the desires and sees every one alike For him every woman is his mother He never tells a lie He never takes the property of others He is always devoid of infatuation and deception and whose mind is completely detached from worldly desires He, whose mind is intensely engaged in the recollection of Rāma Nāma, is real Vaisnava All the places of pilgrimage (तीर्थ) abide in his body He is free from greediness and fraud, he has abandoned sensuality and anger Narasī says that he, who saw this kind of Vaiṣṇava, has carried across his fourteen ancestral lines



"Having, then, on one occasion, put to him the same question which you have asked, the Kaliṅga Brāhmaṇa recalled the story that had been told him by the Muni—the great mystery that had been revealed to him by the pious sage, who remembered his former existence—a dialogue that occurred between Yama and one of his ministers "

"Yama beholding one of his servants with his noose in his hand, whispered to him, and said, "Keep clear of the worshippers of Madhusūdana I am the Lord of all men, the Vaisnavas excepted I was appointed by Brahmā, who is reverenced by all the immortals, to restrain mankind, and regulate the consequences of good and evil in the universe But he who obeys Hari, as his spiritual guide, is here independent of me, for Visnu is of power to govern and control me. As gold is one substance still, however diversified as bracelets, tiaras, or ear-rings, so Hari is one and the same, although modified in the forms of gods, animals and man. As the drop of water, raised by wind from the earth, sink into the earth again when the wind subsides, so the varieties of gods, men, and animals, which have been detached by the agitation of the qualities, are reunited, when that disturbance ceases, with the eternal. He who through holy knowledge diligently adores the lotus foot of that Hari, who is reverenced by the gods, is released from all the bonds of sin, and you must avoid him as you would avoid fire fed with oil "

"Having heard these injunctions of Yama, the messenger addressed the lord of righteousness, and said, 'Tell me, master, how am I to distinguish the worshipper of Hari who is the protector of all beings ?' Yama replied, 'You are to consider the worshipper of Visnu, him who never deviates from the duties prescribed to his caste; who looks with equal indifference upon friend or enemy, who takes nothing (that is not his own), nor injures any being Know that person of unblemished mind to be a worshipper of Visnu. Know him to be a devout worshipper of Hari, who has placed Janārdana in his pure mind, which has been freed from fascination, and whose soul is undefiled by the soil of the Kali age Know that excellent man to be a worshipper of

Visnu, who, looking upon golden secret, holds that which is another's wealth but as grass, and devotes all his thoughts to the Lord Pure is he as a mountain of clear crystal; for how can Viṣnu abide in the hearts of men with malice and envy, and other evil passions ? The glowing heat of fire abides not in a cluster of the cooling rays of the moon He who lives pure in thought, free from malice, contented, leading a holy life, feeling tenderness for all creatures, speaking wisely and kindly, humble and sincere, has Vāsudeva ever present in his heart As the young Sāla tree by its beauty declares the excellence of the juices which it has imbibed from the earth, so when the eternal has taken up his abode in the bosom of any one, that man is lovely amidst the beings of this world Depart, my servant, quickly from those men whose sins have been dispersed by moral and religious merit,* whose minds are daily dedicated to the imperceptible deity, and who are exempt from pride, uncharitableness, and malice In the heart in which the divine Hari, who is without beginning or end, abides, armed with a sword, a shell, and mace, sin cannot remain, for it cannot coexist with that which destroys it, as darkness cannot continue in the world when the sun is shining. The eternal makes not his abode in the heart of that man who covets another's wealth, who injures living creatures, who speaks harshness and untruth, who is proud of his iniquity, and whose mind is evil Janārdana occupies not his thoughts who envies another's prosperity, who calumniates the virtuous, who never sacrifices nor bestows gifts upon the pious, who is blinded by the property of darkness That vile wretch is no worshipper of Visnu, who through avarice is unkind to his nearest friends and relations, to his wife, children, parents, and dependents The brute-like man whose thoughts are evil, who is addicted to unrighteous acts, who ever seeks the society of the wicked, and suffers no day to

* Or Yama and Niyama The duties intended by these terms are variously enumerated The commentator on the text specifies under the first head, absence of violence or cruelty to other beings (Ahimsā), honesty (Asteya), truth (Satya), chastity (Brahmacaryya), and disinterestedness or non acceptance of gifts (Aparigraha) Under Niyama are comprehended purity (Śauca), contentment (Santosa), devotion (Tapas), study of the Vedas (Svādhyāya), and adoration of the supreme (Īsvara-pranidhāna)

pass without the perpetration of crime, is no worshipper of Vāsudeva Do you proceed afar off from those in whose hearts Ananta is enshrined, from him whose sanctified understanding conceives the supreme male and ruler, Vāsudeva, as one with his votary, and with all this world Avoid those holy persons who are constantly invoking the lotus-eyed Vāsudeva, Visnu, the supporter of the earth, the immortal wielder of the discus and the shell, the asylum of the world Come not into the sight of him in whose heart the imperishable soul resides, for he is defended from my power by the discus of his deity he is designed for another world (for the heaven of Visnu) "

"Such," said the Kalinga Brāhmana, "were the instructions communicated by the deity of justice, the son of the sun to his servants, as they were repeated to me by that holy personage, and as I have related them to you, chief of the house of Kuru (Bhīsma) So also, Nakula, I have faithfully communicated to you all I heard from my pious friend, when he came from his country of Kalinga to visit me I have thus explained to you, as was fitting, that there is no protection in the ocean of the world except Visnu, and that the servants and ministers of Yama, the king of the dead himself, and his tortures, are all unavailing against one who places his reliance on that divinity "



विद्याविनयसपन्ने ब्राह्मणे गवि हस्तिनि ।
शुनि चैव श्वपाके च पण्डिताः समदर्शिनः ॥

The wise look with the same eye on a Brāhmana endowed with learning and culture, a cow an elephant, a dog, and a pariah too

—*Gītā V 18*



'The Glory of Viṣṇu Sahasranāma of Padmapurāṇa

—Pandit Jankinath Sharma

Where there is no mention of remedies for sins the name of God has been proclaimed as the best remedy for them The result of pilgrimages of the holy shrines of Kuruksetra, Kāśī and Gayā becomes very easily available by mere uttering these hundred and thousand names of God The names of God cure the devotees from all diseases and make them pure from all sins They also make them free from debts and other several troubles Their names also afford with the devotees large kingdoms and sons to issueless women and such so many other things

The Visnusahasranāma occurs in several Purānas, Āgamas and in the Mahābhārata Bhīsmaparva There are several expositions Of Ācārya Śankara is the most important which has been published from Gita Press several times One very peculiar Visnu Sahasranāma appears in the uttarakhanda of Padmapurāna It deeply influenced and attracted the minds of devotees and has also charmed Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsajī the author of Rāmacaritamānasa, Gītāvalī, Vinaya-patrikā and other several books

A great portion of Uttarakānda of Rāmacaritamānasa is a literal translation of this Sahasranāma So it is well proved that Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsajī recited this Sahasranāma everyday at the time of his daily worship

This Sahasranāma has also been compiled in the Śāktapramoda and other Vaisnava-Āgamas This Sahasranāma has been originally uttered by Bhagavān Śankara and afterwards by the sage Agastya to his disciple Sutīksna It is mentioned in the Dohāvalī of Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa in the following couplet—

सहसनाम मुनि भनित सुनि तुलसीबल्लभ नाम ।
सकुचित हियँ हँसि निरखि सिय धरम धुरंधर राम ॥

(Dohāvalī 188)

According to this couplet once Lord Rāma was hearing this Sahasranāma and then heard one of His names in his thousand names as beloved of Tulasī He looked at the face of Sītā, laughed and also felt ashamed As His one wife's vow was questionable here

The verse of this Sahasranāma-where the word 'Tulasīvallabha' appears, runs as follows—

तुलसीवल्लभो वीरो वामाचाराखिलेष्टदः ॥
महाशिवः शिवारूढो भैरवैककपालधृक् ।

Knowing not the source of this verse, all the translaters and exponents tell that this name comes in the 'Rāma-Sahasranāma' But though there are several Rāma-Sahasranāmas yet this name does not appear in them at any place Few names of this Visnu Sahasranāma are given below—

1 वासुदेव	One who is seated in the hearts of all beings
2 पर ब्रह्म	Supreme Brahma (Absolute one)
3 परमात्मा	The great Soul
4 परात्पर	Transcendental One
5 पर धाम	Supreme abode
6 पर ज्योति	Supreme light
7 पर तत्त्वम्	Supreme Principle (Profound secret)
8 पर पदम्	Ultimate destination
9 पर शिव	Supreme peace, Supreme happiness, Supreme auspiciousness
10 परो ध्येय	Supreme object of Meditation
11 पर ज्ञानम्	Supreme Knowledge
12 परा गति	Supreme goal
13 परमार्थ	The essence of Truth divine
14 परश्रेष्ठ	Supreme Being
15 परानन्द	Supreme Bliss

Note—This Visnu Sahasranāma is published and available at Gita press Gorakhpur
—Editor

Some Important Vaiṣṇava Mantras

1 ॐ नमो नारायणाय।

Om Namo Nārāyanāya

2 ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय।

Om Namo Bhagavate Vāsudevāya

If muttered constantly, every one of the above said mantras, can fulfil all the desires of a devotee

3 हरि शरणम्।

Harih Śaranam

Always muttered by catuhsana (Sanaka, Sanātana, Sanandana and Sanatkumāra) Due to muttering of this mantra they maintain their childhood

4 ॐ ह्रीं ह्रीं श्रीं श्रीं लक्ष्मीवासुदेवाय नम ।

Om Hrīm Hrīm Śrīm Śrīm Laksmīvāsudevāya Namah

For attaining Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Moksa this Mantra is to be repeated at all times

5 ॐ उग्रवीर महाविष्णु ज्वलन्त सर्वतोमुखम्।
नृसिह भीषण भद्र मृत्युमृत्यु नमाम्यहम्॥

Om Ugravīram Mahāvisnum Jvalantam Sarvatomukham
Nrsimham Bhīsanam Bhadram Mrtyumrtyum Namāmyaham
To get all desires fulfilled





Bhagavatī Lakṣmī and Bhagavān Viṣṇu

Viṣṇu and His Śakti Lakṣmī

—Dr V P. Tewari

Obeisances and obeisances to Visnu a thousand times the dispeller of the fear of rebirths, the one Lord of all the regions, possessed of a tranquil form. Lying on a bed of snakes, from whose navel has sprung the lotus. Visnu means omnipresence. The omnipresence and divinity of Visṇu is equally present in both of His forms as *vyakta* (with form) and *avyakta* (formless). The whole of the creation is filled with His energy. He is Primal being, is essence and the most ancient Person. Essentially Brahmā, Visnu and Śiva are identical. Lord Janārdana, though essentially one, assumes the name of Brahmā at the time of creation of this universe, that of Visnu while maintaining it, and that of Śiva while destroying it *(Viṣnupurāna)*. This trinity is worshipped in one form of God—Dattātreya, first is Brahmā, in the middle is Visnu and Śiva at the other end.

At special events to His devotees Viṣnu appears in Divine Form with four arms. The four-armed Divine Form is essentially difficult to perceive, even the gods are always eager to behold this form. The Lord of all celestials, the support of the universe, similar to the sky with handsome limbs. The Lord of Lakṣmī (The Goddess of wealth), having lotus-like eyes and realised by Yogīs in meditation, Visnu is the ultimate resort of the universe and the highest abode. Rāma and Krsna are His incarnations.

Lord Visnu is like a Cintāmani, in fulfilling the desires of His devotees. He is even more handsome than the Cupid or Kāmadeva. He is always in full youth. He is most attractive and handsome as compared to any one in the three worlds. His body and eyes give a very pleasing look. He is like radiant sun. The face of Bhagavān Visnu is always with a glimpse of a sweet smiling look. The teeth are like shining jewels and the nose is very

attractive In his four handsome arms are beheld conch, cakra, mace and lotus He wears a beautiful *Pītāmbara* and a beautiful crown studded with shining jewels seen on His forehead. He has a beautiful round face On the right side of His chest are seen the beautiful foot-prints of Bhrgu The foot-prints prove a great tolerance and forgiveness of Bhagavān Visnu With all His divine ornaments and weapons Lord Visnu is seen seated on Garuda.His vehicle

Weapons of Viṣṇu—

Lord Visnu is equipped with innumerable weapons and missiles To mention a few principal ones are conch, cakra, mace, arrow and bow, battle axe, pāśa and sword The conch of Bhagavān Visnu is known as Pāñcajanya The Sudarśana Cakra (missile) was awarded to Visnu by Śiva

Viṣṇu in the Form of Śālagrāma—

Śālagrāma is considered as the idol of Bhagavān Visnu Lord Visnu was converted in the form of Śālagrāma by the curse of Vrndā, and Vrndā was also converted into Tulasī Unlike the idols of other gods it is not necessary to get the Śālagrāma established (prāna-pratisthā) Further, that it is not necessary getting the āvāhana and visarjana since Lord Visnu is always seated in Śālagrāma Śālagrāma is worshipped like other established idols, the visarjana is prohibited The sacred Tulasī is always associated with Śālagrāma excepting only at the time of śayana in the night At the time of śayana Tulasī Patra is removed from the top of the Śālagrāma and placed in the neighbourhood

Śālagrāmas are always worshipped in even number, but two are not worshipped at one place The worship of Śālagrāmas in odd number is prohibited but one can be worshipped Women have no right to worship Śālagrāma, however, they can get Him worshipped by a Brāhmana priest

Worship System of Vaiṣṇavism—

The followers of Visnu are known as Vaisṇavites There are two schools of Visnu worship Unlike tripundra of Śaivites the Vaisnavites use upright tilaka. Chiefly two mantras are chanted by Vaisnavites—

ॐ नमो नारायणाय

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय

These mantras are chanted on Tulasī or Rudrāksa mālā Vaisnavites observe fast on every *ekādaśī* Use of Tulasī leaves is a must in Visnu worship The Vaisnavites make marks of conch and cakra one each on their shoulders Like Śiva Gāyatrī there is Visnu Gāyatrī verse also A Vaisnava devotee takes dīksā (initiation) by a well versed Vaisnavite Guru

Avatāras of Viṣṇu—

At times the devotees during Sādhanā (spiritual discipline) reach to a state of elevation that God cannot resist Himself and has to appear in Divine Form Further, that when necessity arises the God has to incarnate The principal purpose of an avatāra (incarnation) is to bless all the living beings and to show the right path to the future generations Further that man cannot be successful easily in knowing God by his own efforts of jñāna, dhyāna and worship of God who has not taken the form of a person Therefore, God comes to the earth in human form so that attainment of God becomes easier He has all his intentions that, at any cost Jīva should take refuge in Him All the religions preach for the attainment of God-realisation God-realisation can be achieved when we have developed devotion in God, devotion can only come through love and finally the love cannot emerge without attraction or kinship It is, therefore, the God incarnation that He takes a very attractive form and does attractive sports (spiritual games) so that people are attracted towards Him, as has been in the avatāras of Rāma and Krsna The chief purpose of an avatāra is to establish righteousness and destruction of the evil and undesirable elements, so that a balance is made in His creation Rāma and Krsna are the avatāras of Lord Visnu

Rāmāyana is an international work by Maharsi Vālmīki Tulasīdāsa has created Rāmacaritamānasa which has been a very powerful source for acquiring spiritual attainments by recitation and akhanda pātha and following the limits demarcated by Rāma Rāma is worshipped in innumerable temples all over the country The temples of Rāma are in various forms such as Sītā-Rāma,

Sītā-Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, and Rāma Pañcāyatana.

Kṛṣṇa is also an incarnation of Lord Visnu After taking birth in the four-armed Visnu form, on the request of Devakī and Vāsudeva he assumed the form of a child again and requested them to take Him to the house of Bābā Nanda (Bhāgavata) Plenty of literature is available for Kṛṣṇa's worship and also of His attractive sports and Rāsa-Līlās in which He made, by His yogamāyā, forms as many as there used to be gopīs in Rāsa-Līlās Innumerable temples of Kṛṣna are located in India.

Message of Bhagavadgītā was narrated from the lotus-like lips of Lord Krsna to Arjuna during the famous Mahābhārata war. Śrī Krsna the supreme Master of Yoga also revealed to Arjuna His Supreme Divine Form (Viśvarūpa) before Mahābhārata battle. As a book of scripture it has assumed a position of universal interest Many western scholars have also written their commentries on Holy Gītā and a good number of collection could be found from London Library and many of the libraries of the world Truely speaking, none has power to describe in words the glory of the Gītā The manner in which the Gītā describes the virtues, glory, secrets of God, is hardly found in any scripture Gītā narrated from the lotus-like lips of Lord Krsna is an incomparable book

In fact, Rāma and Krsna have been much more powerful than Visnu Himself in imparting spiritual teachings through Rāmacaritamānasa and Bhagavadgītā, chanting their names and Kīrtana, worship of their idols and temples, and pilgrimages connected with them

There have been twenty two avatāras of Lord Visṇu— Varāha, Sanakādi, Nārada, Nara-Nārāyana, Kapila, Dattātreya, Yajña, Hari, Rsabha, Prthu, Matsya, Kūrma, Dhanavantari, Mohinī, Nar-Simha, Vāmana, Paraśurāma, Rāma, Vyāsa, Kṛsna, Buddha and Kalki with the inclusion of Hamsa and Hayagrīva they become twenty four

Viṣṇu Sahasranāma—

Visnu Śatanāma and Sahasranāma and their excellences are available for worship, some of these names are Visnu-

omnipresent, Bhubhrt-maintainer of all living beings, Narasiṁha-vapu—incarnation of man-lion, Padmanābha—from whose navel has sprung the lotus, Viśvakarmā—the creator, Madhusūdana—killer of the demon Madhu, Caturbhuja—four-armed, Vāmana-incarnation of Vāmana, Prajāpati—maintainer of the whole kingdom, Aśoka— free from all the agonies, Sulocana—with beautiful eyes, Acyuta—unshakable at all times and Sarveśvara—God of gods.

Famous Temples of Viṣṇu—

Lord Visnu is worshipped by different names and forms such as—Visnu with four arms, Laksmī-Nārāyana, Satyanārāyaṇa, Nara-Nārāyaṇa, Venkateśa, Bālājī, Laksmī-Narasiṁha and Śālagrāma Some of the famous temples are enumerated, they are— Visnu (Visnu Prayāga, Badrīnātha (U P), Hari-Kī-paurī, (Haradwar), Laksmī-Nārāyana (Amritsar, Chambanagar, Baxur, Delhi), Satya-Nārāyana (Bangalore, Kashi), Triyugī-Nārāyaṇa (U P), Nara-Nārāyaṇa (Bombay), Bālājī (Tirupati, A P), Vaikuntha Nātha (Calcutta), Padmanābha (Trivandrum), Ranganātha (Tiruchirapalli), and Varāh-Laksmī-Narasimha Svāmī (Sinhachalam).

Lakṣmī—

Lord Visnu is the basis of the creation and Laksmī is His Śakti therefore they are one and the same. Laksmī is one of the ten goddesses (Mahāvidyās), Visnu is omnipresent hence Laksmī is also omnipresent Whenever Visnu takes avatāra Laksmī always incarnates with Him, with Rāma she is Sītā and with Krsna she is Rukminī During sport Śakti and Śaktimān appear different but essentially Laksmī-Nārāyana, Sītā-Rāma and Rādhā-Krsna are one and the same Sun and its light are one, likewise Laksmī and Nārāyana are identical

Bhagavatī Laksmī is also known by several names such as Mādhavī, Mādhava-Priyā, Padmā, Ramā and Indirā She has appeared from the ocean after the mythological churning of the ocean by Suras and Asuras Mahālaksmī is not different from Mahākālī and Mahāsarasvatī and is chiefly known as 'Śrī' in Purānas Her worship is in vogue by different names from time immemorial Laksmī is of golden complexion and like Visnu

wears *Pītāmbara* She is with four-arms with varamudrā, abhayamudrā, lotus and cakra and is seated on lotus Four elephants by their trunks are continuously offering *abhiseka* from amṛta kalaśa Lotus is the symbol of brightness and peace and Laksmī is the store house of beauty and a symbol of wealth When both of these are combined it is like gold with fragrance The combination of Laksmī and lotus have, therefore, become immortal in Indian culture and literature Owl is the vehicle of Laksmī

In the form of light and wealth Laksmī has been associated with the dīpāvalī celebrations In the mid-night of dīpāvalī there is a special Laksmī-pūjā In the form of Dīpa-Laksmī she is associated by holding one or two dīpa in her hands

Goddess Laksmī has both vyakta and avyakta forms She is established in both of these forms in the universe whatever is seen in the female form is the representation of Laksmī For her worship Śatanāma Stotra, Sahasranāma Stotra,Śrīsūkta and Laksmī Tantra are available The worship of Laksmī is fully narrated in the Saubhāgya Laksmī Upanisad When she is pleased she fulfils all the desires of Her devotees just by a glance of compassion only.

"Jai Mahāmāyā Kī Jai"



नमो भगवते तुभ्यं वासुदेवाय विष्णवे। पुरुषायादिबीजाय पूर्णबोधाय ते नमः ॥
अजाय जनयित्रेऽस्य ब्रह्मणेऽनन्तशक्तये। परावरात्मन् भूतात्मन् परमात्मन् नमोऽस्तु ते ॥

Salutations to You, who are no other than Lord Visnu, though appearing as a son of Vasudeva Salutations to You, who are anterior to all evolutes, the Cause (even) of Prakrti (the source of the entire creation), (the Embodiment of) perfect knowledge Hail to You, the birthless Creator of this (objective) universe, the Absolute, possessed of endless potencies (my) salutation be to You, O Inner controller of the great and the small, O Lord, who are one with the five (gross) elements O Supreme Spirit !

—*Bhāgavata (X 59 27-28)*





The Excellence of Viṣṇu-Sahasranāma and the Greatness of the Names, Acyuta, Ananta etc.

—Swami Brahmanand

राम रामेति रामेति रमे रामे मनोरमे।
सहस्त्रनाम तत्तुल्यं रामनाम वरानने ॥

Let us, at the outset, say our pranāmas and prostrate before them in all reverence to the seer-Gurus who guided and are guiding us to recognise the Visnu Tattva and to abide in It, the Acyuta, for ever Also repeated reverential salutations to the Lord Visnu—the all-pervading and permeating Principle May peace be unto all those that are experiencing that That is ever-present Visṇu, who has been given that very name only for His all-pervasiveness-Omnipresence

Since, we at the very starting, have given the most supreme seat and adoration, it is apt for any one and every one to feel inquisitive and anxious to know and learn what is that all-pervasive Visnu and the learning of which can shower on us everlasting Peace and Happiness, in the context that we are enshrouded by all sorts of unrest, worries and woes, dangers and pitfalls in this our present mundane life

It is the Lord Visnu who is the ever-existing Divinity, from the tiniest atom to the biggest planet, who is the primal cause and source for the existence of all the sentient and insentient He is the protector He is the guiding Godhood to emancipate us from our first bondage i e birth and death and its train of all woes of this worldiness

The present-day life in this world is at cross-roads Practically no where, in any nook and corner of the world, there is peace and rest Generally none in the universe, either in the east or the west is happy and satisfied Lord Krsna declared unambiguously in His

song celestial that this world is a home of miseries and transience. We are seeing the truth in it with our own eyes and hearing with our own ears What more proof do we need to accept that pin-pointing statement of His, in toto? Man must protect himself How? By placing all his living-mental, vocal and physical life implicitly in Him He should observe all His dictations, by simply acting and leading the life as per the scriptures He is also expected not to harbour any grudging or grumbling, without any iota of doubt and non-belief

Oh man ! The time is up for immediate action for putting the precept into practice. It is high time for the whole of human society to gird up loins and jump straight away to live spiritually.

The message, that is needed by the present age, is the practical Vedānta that is contained in the prophetic preachings of the line of savants started from Vivekānanda and Swāmī Rāma The sum total of all world-scriptures of all the past and present is practical Vedānta only, when studied in their depth with a pristine pure unbiased base of the mind

As all roads lead to Varanasi, all the ways and means that have been recorded by all the world seers and sages wishing the welfare of the world and are being shown by our worshippable gurus lead to that One Goal—the release of the souls from the clutches of the woes of the world

Out of the good many means one such sure way is Viṣṇu Sahasranāma-recital and leading the life as per its dictum

Visnu-Sahasranāma is not a compilation or a combination or a heap of thousand simple wordy names The whole Sahasranāma is a unit You should guess and form the Form of formless Visnu from those thousand aspects of His Tattva You should visualize His manifesting as this gross physical mundane world and maintaining it and finally dissolving it into its soruce—Who is no other than Him—The Existence, Knowledge, Bliss

The one existence—The Brahma—The Reality in the beginning intended to become many—these manifested all and decided to pervade, permeate and abide in every speck and atom for ever as

its substratum and run this continuously flowing show.

One, who realizing this very truth, leads this life through this experience namely 'Sarvam Visnumayam Jagat'—All this is Vāsudeva alone He alone, is the Knower This is the religion of Vāsudeva Bhagavān—The Lord Visnu

The straight, short, sure and simple way to live this Truth in one's being is the Visnu-Sahasranāma way

As if to prove the certainty, the efficacy and the greatness of Visnu-Sahasranāma, the Ācārya-trio laid their hands on it and blessed the humanity with their immortal commentaries Only, with their showering Light on the Path, we are marching forward and progressing towards the Goal Of course, there are dark days when the humanity, out of ignorance, neglected it and began to grope in utter darkness and disappointment

The below is an ancient śloka which enunciated the six reasons why Visnu-Sahasranāma stotra should be worshipped daily by everyone at all times (Here worship means not mere muttering of the many names but translating the conceptions and perceptions of these names into action so as to arrive at the supreme saccidānanda Brahma state alone Nothing less nothing more)

mahābhārata sāratvādrsibhih parigānatah
vedācārya samāhārāt bhīsmotkrstamatatvatah
parigrahātiśayato gītādyaikārthyataśca nah
sahasranāmnāmadhyāyah upādeyatamo matah

(1) Being the essence of Mahābhārata (2) these being pleasingly sung and elatedly repeated by the seers and the realised (3) as has been coded, compiled and recorded by the professor of Vedas of the stature of Śrī Vedavyāsa maharsi himself (4) which has been eulogised and extolled with full adoration and implicit admiration by the Grandsire, Bhīsmapitāmaha (5) that which is admitted, recognised and accepted as a fitting treatise by all the competent persons of the worldly and spiritual fields (6) and finally that which has consonance in its meaning with the tune of thought of all the scriptures of universal authority like Gītā etc —everyone is to

receive this with a welcome heart and soul and follow in its footprints

In wordly gains like complete cures of all kinds of diseases, driving away ghosts and devils and protection of the Natal-houses (Sūtikāgrha) etc this Sahasranāma is an unfailing remedial measure

In addition to the above score of points for its credit, there is one more valued certificate It is the Lord's personnal presence while Bhīsma offered this devotional prayer of these thousand names to Him while lying on the bed of arrows Being obliged by Bhīsma's devotion and dedication, out of gratitude, He too, began to meditate on Bhīsma's flawless and selfless complete surrender

Knowing the efficacy of this stotra, He advocated Dharma-rāja—the depiction of Dharma—to adopt this Sādhana for himself Also, He spoke in approval of its efficacy in fulfilling the four Prime values of human life—Dharma, Artha Kāma and Moksa

A conspicuously notable thing about the Great Sahasranāma is that many of the 'Names' are having the worthiness and capacity to be used as 'Mantras' to attain the ends of the individuals' ambitions Some can bestow worldly benefits or benefits of here, some are wish-yielding Tree of the desires of the hereafter and some are powerful and capable of gracing with, in the truth of 'I-am-Brahma' experience

While proclaiming the Greatness of Viṣnu-Sahasranāma, the Lord declares that even the repetition of one śloka is enough to make Him pleased and to bless such ones

Śrī Bhagavān Uvāca—

yo mām nāmasahasrena sotumicchati pāndava
so'hamekena ślokena stuta eva na samśayah

Here, the Lord, means in His Heart of hearts, that even one word i e one Name is enough to please Him

Once Mother Pārvatī Prayerfully asks Īśvara which is the abridged or rather short-cut device that can shower all the boons that the whole Sahasranāma reading yields Īśvara answers with

all conviction that—

rām rāmeti rāmeti rame rāme manorame
sahasranāma tattulyam rāmanāma varānane

This shows that any one name of Visnu is enough to come out successful in this world's drama

They say with unquestionable authority that in the womb of that single syllable Om, all that is seen and unseen is contained Out of that one Om, everything emanated—manifested and unmanifested If one meditates on Om, he is considered to have meditated on the Whole—The Brahma

The Upanisads—the containers of the supreme wisdom are presenting us with so many vidyās—meditations One can follow any one of those, as per his temperament One can choose any of them that suits him as his way of sādhanā

There are 'Prajñānam Brahma' mahāvākya Vidyā in Aitareya, 'Satyam-Jñānam-Anantaṁ Brahma' Vidyā in Tattirīya, 'Ādeśa Vidyā' in Kena and 'Pūrna Vidyā' in Khila kānda of Bṛhadāranyaka and so on and so forth Each and everyone of these has its own tenor and Vigour and important in its place in freeing the soul from the sense of bondage The main purport and purpose of their existence in the Upanisads is to impart to souls the roads that lead to the sole goal of their precious human births.

Every scripture ordains all those, pining for peace and perfection to read Sahasranāma sincerely, seriously and devotedly everyday completely But at the same time, in the most intelligible terms it tells us, also, that atleast one of its ślokas or a part of it or even a vital word be repeated The same one word metamorphoses itself into a powerful efficacious mantra which releases the soul Even from the Gītā Māhātmya ślokas also, we learn the same.

One such spiritual word in Visnu-Sahasranāma is 'Acyuta'

A Sādhaka says, supported by his inner feelings and the light he is having on his path, that contemplation and concentration on the word 'Acyuta' will take us a long way and leave us in that experience—the aim and purpose of every scripture of the world

We believe in God We believe his word 'Veda' and its final

conclusive decisions in the great upanisads. They are the 'Mahāvākyas' 'Ahaṁ Brahmāsmi' and 'Tat Tvam Asi' teach us that we are in reality That Saccidānanda Brahma

These are the revelations of the seers They cannot be exaggerations They are not false babblings or senseless prattlings It is the Truth, the only Truth

To understand, know and realise through experience anything, one should have the concept of the teaching—Tadarthabhāvanam in the right way and sense Then only one can ascend to the spiritual planes, kicking back the physical ideas

As per etymology, the derivation of the word 'Cyutam' is 'Cyavate iti cyutam'—means that is fallen

You cannot count the angles from which a diamond glitters So also the emanations and expressions, manifestations and the actions of the Lord are beyond the enumerations of the man's mind The Lord—the nameless was given as many names as His actions are A thousand names for the Lord are a few symbols for the numberless names that can be expressed in words and those that are beyond the speech

All the names of His, when uttered with their meaning in the bosom of our minds, will draw us towards Him This is a divine law The Lord-made mechanism of the mind and the Divinity is such an infallible arrangement As already said, previously, all the names are equally efficacious in bestowing complete release for the mind to get out of its false identification with the body and with the world with its unending woes

The name Acyuta is one such If one goes on pondering over its meaning, the Acyuta state of the Lord, incessantly with concentration of the waveless mind, he, within no time, attains what is to be attained

The name is there to depict us the Lord's reality, His state of ever-abiding without the least fall or modification, shining in His full glory diffusing Peace and Love uninterruptedly He is undecaying Why so many words ? The name carries a world of meaning Acyuta is everything He is the whole He is the complete and fullness He is saccidānanda Brahma alone

Now let us see how the name 'Acyuta' helps us to reach him We have already learnt that Acyuta means that which never falls Acyuta never falls from his Saccidānanda state The mahāvākya reminds us that we too are that alone Then we come to know for certain we are in reality that Saccidānanda entity itself which never falls Then, when and where is the scope and space for our falling and feeling that we are mortal and bound by the shackles of all dualities ?

All scriptures speak so in one voice Gītā, too in corroboration with the rest, unequivocally tells that in terms like know, Arjuna, that the Ksetrajña in all the Ksetras is Myself alone

When the truth is so, why man being the same Brahma is so degraded, depressed and weeping ? Since, he has fallen from the consciousness—'I am Brahma—Acyuta '

Acyuta never falls from His God consciousness The fallen consciousness is Jīvātmā Acyuta taught Arjuna—the representative of the jīva—the whole of Gītā only to uplift his lost or forgotten consciousness That is why, in the end Arjuna in answer says that his 'Moha'—delusion, that veiled his consciousness and which put him in the place of a weeping jīva, has been removed and now smrti—consciousness is reigning in him to enable him to realize his real self

In one context, Acyuta says that you, Oh fallen Arjuna ! Do not know either your self or My Self while I, being the Acyuta know Mine and yours equally, well

When the gold is unadulterated and pristinely pure, its, value, status, popularity and respect will be there in their fullness When the steadfast consciousness that 'I am Brahma, Thou art that, and am Saccidānanda Itself is there glowing, there can be no sorrow, ignorance and unhappiness for him in the world Having fallen from the consciousness or knowledge that we are Saccidānanda, we are bound to eat the fruit of our action, the bondage and its multi-welling woes

You may ask this question How are we to retain the consciousness from falling ? All those principles and disciplines are there defined clearly, elaborately and in every detail in all the

scriptures They are being always propagated and disseminated by sages and seers in a continuous flow Everybody is expected to know all of them in the first quarter of their lives only We are not doing so as is necessary and ordained So the social fall is there universally

Lord Krsna taught the world in a very easily understandable language that one should approach a guru, serve him, question him in all politeness and then he will help you to make you yourself wise

In one context, the Lord says—Mām anusmara yudhya ca—therefore, Arjuna ! Think of me at all times and fight This comes to the same thing as asking him not to fall from the Reality

Śrī Svāmī Omkārajī Mahārāja was telling—God, if you think God you are, dust, if you think, dust you are This is in other words—Yad Bhāvyaṁ Tad Bhavati—What you think, so you become Lord Acyuta-consciousness is ever-shining God-consciousness Jīva is the fallen ungodly consciousness

If you wash the dross and uplift the fallen consciousness to its Reality, Jīva alone is Brahma You are not creating or bringing anything new Standing in the Light of Truth is enough

When the woes of the world wrap you, the Jīva, if you rise to your Acyuta-consciousness and roar like a lion, all of them run away as a deer with the appearance of a hunter

Abiding in one's own original Real state, is the Siddha's position, i e , Svasvarūpasthiti Svasvarūpānusandhānasthiti is the state of a sādhaka Abiding in the state contrary to the above and assuming the conceived state of body-consciousness is ignorance and the fallen state

(1) The state of sthitaprajña (2) the state of mind consciousness or 'I-mine' consciousness continuously flowing into the Supreme consciousness (3) the state of surrendering the finite 'I' to the infinite 'I' and lastly (4) making the prthagbhāva—individualised consciousness merge in the limitless divine consciousness—all lead to the same Acyuta state, though worded in various ways

The Acyuta sādhanā above is enough to attain the Grand whole This Acyuta Vidyā—meditation on the Acyuta thought as

other Vıdyās ın the varıous upanısadas wıll hold good for all the four Karma, Bhaktı, Dhyāna and Jñāna Yoga followers The Acyuta can never fall down because He ıs Ananta who transcends tıme, space and causatıon He ıs Omnıpresence. Where ıs the scope for Ananta to fall ? Whatever ıs , ıs He alone There ıs nothıng other than Hım That whıch cannot fall ın consciousness or thought or ıdea or mınd ıs Acyuta, the Lord That which falls ıs Jīva The Jīva, who earnestly yearns for Eternalhood, should aspıre and lıve accordıng to the teachıngs of Lord

The knowledge about Ananta can be had ın the Brahmānanda-vallī of Taıttırīya 'Satyam-Jñānam-Anantaṁ Brahma' Vıdyā ıs there to make you well-versed ın Anantam aspect of the Lord The Ananta Brahma exısts not only now but even at the dıssolutıon of the world—the condıtıon of the absence of all the forms and names Thıs cannot be explaıned ın words by any But the statement Saccıdānanda meanıng Exıstence-Knowledge-Blıss-Absolute can rıghtly and surely take our understandıng or consciousness ınto that source of Brahmıc consciousness, whıch we named as Acyuta, Ananta, Jñāna and Brahma etc, etc

The Govınd-Dāmodara Stotra of the great mystıcal savant, Śrī Līlāśuka, can tell us the whole thıng about the wonderful achıevements of repeatıng the one name— Govında or Dāmodara or Mādhava The Vısnu-Sahasranāma ıs a bunch of all powerful and potent mystically dıvıne names Vısnu-Sahasranāma contaıns all these names ın ıts body Anybody ırrespectıve of caste, creed or relıgıon can reap ıts fruıts by sowıng them ın hıs sādhanā-fields

May Peace be unto all ! Harıh Om Tat-sat Om



Some Ślokas of Ālvandāra Stotra

स्वाभाविकाऽनवधिकाऽतिशयेशितृत्वं
नारायण ! त्वयि न मृष्यति वैदिकः कः ।
ब्रह्मा शिवः शतमखः परमः स्वराडि-
त्येतेऽपि यस्य महिमार्णवविप्रुषस्ते ॥

O Nārāyana ! Support of the whole universe ! Indweller of al the beings ! Thou art naturally Thy self the controller of the whole Universe None else is equal to You, how then can any one be superior to You in lordliness A votary of Vedas must agree to this view As not only Brahmā, Śiva and Indra but even the liberated exalted souls are mere drops in the ocean of Your excellences

नमो नमो वाङ्मनसातिभूमये नमोनमो वाङ्मनसैकभूमये ।
नमो नमोनन्तमहाविभूतये नमो नमोऽनन्तदयैकसिन्धवे ॥

O Lord ! Thou art beyond the ken of speech and mind My salutations to Thee again and again Thy excellences even being transcendental, Thy devotees make an attempt to eulogize them to some extent through their speech and mind Thy Majesties are infinite O such Lord ! My salutations to Thee

O Ocean of boundless mercy ! Obeisance to Thee again

निरासकस्याऽपि न तावदुत्सहे महेश हातुं तव पादपङ्कजम् ।
रुषा निरस्तोऽपि शिशुः स्तनन्धयो न जातु मातुश्चरणौ जिहासति ॥

O God of the gods ! O Lord of the masters ! Even if those forsake me, I can't have the courage to abandon you as a breast-sucking babe can never discard her mother even if it is thrown away by its mother in anger

कदा पुनः शङ्खरथाङ्गकल्पकध्वजारविन्दाङ्कुशवज्रलाञ्छनम् ।
त्रिविक्रम त्वच्चरणाम्बुजद्वयं मदीयमूर्द्धानमलंकरिष्यति ॥

O Lord Visnu ! O Traverser of all the spheres of the universe in three steps ! When Thy lotus like feet bearing the marks of a conch, a discus, the wish yielding tree, a flag, a lotus, a goad, a thunderbolt etc will adorn my head again

पिता त्वं माता त्वं दयिततनयस्त्वं प्रियसुह
-त्त्वमेव त्वं मित्रं गुरुरपि गतिश्चाऽसि जगताम्।
त्वदीयस्त्वद्भृत्यस्तव परिजनस्त्वद्गतिरहं
प्रपन्नश्चैवं सत्यहमपि तवैवास्मि हि भरः॥

O Hari! Thou art the father, thou art the mother and thou art the darling son Thou art the loving friend Thou art the well wisher. Thou art the teacher and thou art the supreme goal of the whole Universe I am thy own I am thy servile, I am thy servant I am Thy kith and kin I have taken refuge in Thee I am solely dependent on Thee as Thou art my only support.



O Visnu, Your Name partakes of the essence of *Chit* or consciousness Itself, therefore it is self-luminous, if we utter the Name even without knowledge of its correct pronunciation and value (that is, even if we know it imperfectly), through such repetition only of the letters constituting Your Name, we shall come to know the Reality about you

—Jīva Goswāmī

O priests conducting the sacrifice, propitiate Visnu through praises of His glory, He is the origin and source of all, He is Beginningless It is He who reveals Himself in the form of Sacrifice The Śruti says Sacrifice is Visnu (यज्ञो वै विष्णुः) Or, Rta means water, that water was created by Him The Smrtis also say that He (Visnu) created water first Thus, to the extent you know His glory sing His praises and make yourself blessed by propitiating Him That is, sing whatever amount of His glory you may have realized It is this Name of Visnu that should be worshipped by all The Name Itself reveals that He is the soul of all By knowing the Name 'Visnu', man can attain whatever he desires So saying, the performer of the sacrifice, as though having obtained a direct realization of Visnu, addressed Visnu thus 'O Visnu, O Deva, the soul of all that exists, Thou art great, let us be endowed with the intellect that may perceive Thee '

—Rgveda (I 156 3)

The Ten Avatāras of Viṣṇu and the Twenty-four Līlā Avatāras

The *Bhāgavata Purāna* is a chronicle of the various *avatāras* of Lord Visnu They are 1 Matsya (the Fish) 2 Kūrma (the Tortoise) 3 Varāha (the Boar) 4 Narasimha (the Man-lion) 5 Vāmana (the Dwarf) 6 Paraśurāma (Rāma with the axe) 7 Rāmacandra (Hero of the Rāmāyana) 8 Śrī Krsna 9 Buddha (the Prince-ascetic, founder of Buddhism) and 10 Kalki (the Hero on a white horse who is to come at the end of the Kaliyuga)

1 The object of the Matsya Avatāra was to save Vaivasvata Manu from destruction by a deluge

2 The object of the Kūrma Avatāra was to enable the world to recover some precious things which were lost in the deluge The Tortoise gave its back for keeping the churning-rod when the gods and the asuras churned the ocean of milk

3 The purpose of the Varāha Avatāra was to rescue the earth from the waters after it had been dragged down by a demon named Hiranyāksa

4 The purpose of Narasimha Avatāra, half-lion and half-man, was to free the world from the oppression of Hiranyakaśipu, a demon who was the father of Prahlāda

5 The object of Vāmana Avatāra was to restore the power of the gods which had been eclipsed by the penance and devotion of King Bali

6 The object of Paraśurāma Avatāra was to deliver the country from the oppression of the ksatriya rulers Paraśurāma destroyed the ksatriya race twenty-one times

7 The object of Rāma Avatāra was to destroy the wicked Rāvana Rāma ruled in such a nice way that even today Rāma-Rājya is considered as ideal

8 The object of Śrī Krsna Avatāra was to destroy Kamsa and other demons, to deliver His wonderful message of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, and to become the centre of the bhakti schools in India

9 The object of Buddha Avatāra was to prohibit animal sacrifices

10 The object of the Kalki Avatāra, who will appear before the end of the Kali Yuga, is the destruction of the wicked and the re-establishment of virtue

In addition to these ten *avatāras* there are fourteen others Altogether they are called the twenty-four Līlā Avatāras

1 Yajña, born of Ruci and Ākūti The Yāma Devas were born of Yajña He removed the fears of Trilokī

2 Kapila, born of Kardama Prajāpati and his wife Devahūti He founded the Sānkhya system of philosophy and taught Brahma-vidyā to his mother

3 Dattātreya, the *avatāra* of the three mūrtis—Brahmā, Visnu and Śiva

4 The Kumāras—Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanātana and Sanatkumāra—the four mental sons of Brahmā They retired into the forest for tapas and meditation as virgin youths, and attained Self-realization They disseminated Brahma-vidyā or knowledge of the Self

5 Nara-Nārāyana, were born of Dharma and his wife Mūrti, daughter of Daksa They practised intense tapas in Badrīnārāyana The Celestial nymphs could not allure them

6 On churning the ocean Dhanvantari emerged from the ocean with the pot of Ambrosia There was a fight among Devas and Asuras Asuras took the pot from Dhanvantri's hand leaving the Devas helpless There arose an internecine quarrel in the ranks of Asuras over the distribution of the Ambrosia Lord Visnu incarnated there assuming the form of an exquisitely handsome woman bluish in complexion and youthful in years She was Mohinī All asuras were fascinated by her charms and

bewitching beauty and entrusted the pot of distribution of Ambrosia in her hands. As the Asuras sat silent under the delusion that the Mohinī was full of Love for them, She finished the distribution of the whole of the Ambrosia among the Devas and assumed her real form and cut off the head of the Asura Rāhu, who had crossed into the line of the Devas stealthily and swallowed half of Ambrosia Thus in this incarnation Lord Viṣṇu appeared as Mohinī and helped the Devas.

7 Prthu, who took out riches and eatables from the earth

8 Rsabha. born of Nābhi and Sudevī (Meru Devī) He roamed about as a paramahamsa

9 Hayagrīva, this horse-headed avatāra appeared in the Vaidika yajña and promulgated the *Vedas*

10 Hari, who saved the elephant King Gajendra

11. Hamsa, who narrated bhakti yoga, jñāna and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* to Ṛsi Nārada.

12 The presiding deity of each Manvantara.

13 Dhanvantari, who disseminated the science of medicine (āyurveda)

14 Vyāsa, who narrated the Vedas and set them in order. He wrote the eighteen *Purānas*



मत्तः परतरं नान्यत्किञ्चिदस्ति धनञ्जय।
मयि सर्वमिदं प्रोतं सूत्रे मणिगणा इव॥
रसोऽहमप्सु कौन्तेय प्रभास्मि शशिसूर्ययोः।
प्रणवः सर्ववेदेषु शब्दः खे पौरुषं नृषु॥

There is nothing else besides Me, Arjuna. Like clusters of yarn-beads formed by knots on a thread, all this is threaded on Me Arjuna, I am the sapidity in water and the light in the moon and the sun; I am the sacred syllable Om in all the Vedas. the sound in ether. and the manliness in men

—*Gītā VII.7-8*



Viṣṇu Sahasranāma and its Excellence

—A B Rao

The Sahasranāma Stotras or prayers addressed to some particular Deity of the Hindu Pantheon and invoking Him by thousand names are found scattered throughout the Paurānika literature The most important of these are the Sahasranāma of Devī, Visnu and Śiva Visnu Sahasranāma finds a place in the great epic 'Mahābhārata' This immortal epic viz Mahābhārata is a nice big golden bowl in which two priceless Jewels exist One is the Lord's celestial song known as the famous Bhagavad Gītā and the second is this Visnu Sahasranāma The immortal dialogue between Lord Krsna and his disciple Arjuna, which forms the Gītā, occurred just before the commencement of the great Kuruksetra war between the evil Kauravas and the pious Pāndavas While this Visnusahasranāma occurred just after the end of the hostilities when Pāndavas secured a triumphant victory over their evil forces It is extracted from the Anuśāsanika Parva of the 'Mahābhārata' in the dialogue between Bhīsma and Yudhisthira

The great grandsire Bhīsma lies on a grand bed of arrows so skilfully formed by Arjuna at the command of Bhīsma He wanted to die as a great hero Death was at the command of Bhīsma for after all as per his earlier *Śapatha* (vow), he wanted to secure the safety and well-being of the kingdom known as Hastināpura before his death At this stage the eldest of the Pāndava princes viz Yudhisthira approaches Bhīsma and puts a question for he wanted to learn more from the grandsire before his death that was imminent

What is the Dharma, which is regarded by you as the Supreme one among all Dharmas ? By reciting what (Hymn) is mankind freed from the bonds of birth and Samsāra ?

To this Bhīṣma said—

By all worshipping with devotion that imperishable Purusa, by meditating on Him, by praising Him and by bowing down before Him, the worshipper gets beyond all grief By always praising Viṣnu, who is without beginning and end, who is the Supreme Lord of all the World, and who is the observer of the Universe, one gets beyond all grief. The constant worship with hymns of the lotus-eyed (Visnu) with devotion is regarded by me as the greatest of all Dharmas.

This is the beginning of this famous hymn known as Viṣṇusahasranāma and what follows are the thousand names of the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu. The thousand Names consist of words in the masculine, feminine and neuter genders. Those in the masculine gender qualify Viṣṇu, those in the feminine qualify Devatā and those in the neuter qualify Brahma.

Beginning from the Stanza—*Viśvam* (Universe) "from whom all beings etc." (Verse II) upto the last verse, Brahma the origin, preservation and destruction of the universe has been spoken as single Deity.

This admirable hymn containing the thousand names of the Supreme Person, who has thousands of forms, thousands of eyes, faces, feet and arms, is held in great veneration all over India from cape Camorin to the Himālayas It is recited by persons of all stations in life by the prince and the peasant by the ignorant devotee and the fortunate Yogī, on every occasion of joy or sorrows, fear and hope Miraculous virtues are attributed to and are guaranteed by the author Vyāsa himself This work is commented upon by the famous Śankarācārya In this age of Kaliyuga this hymn is more conducive to the spiritual progress of all classes of persons It requires, unlike any other system of religious devotion, no ceremonies, no stated times or places, no preparation, nor unattainable qualifications in the devotee as the means to salvation It can be recited even without understanding its meaning while travelling in the bus or train or any suitable place for that matter

As it is customary with all Stotras, there is a Phalaśruti attached

to this Stotra also.

That man, who with devotion as perseverance and heart wholly turned towards Him, recites these thousand names of Vāsudeva every day, after having purified himself succeeds in acquiring great fame, a position of eminence enduring prosperity (and lastly) that which is of the highest benefit to him (i e Mokṣa)

Such a man never meets with fear at any time and acquires great powers and energy Disease never affects him, fair complexion, strength, beauty and accomplishments, become his

The sick becomes hale, the afflicted becomes freed from their afflictions, the affrighted becomes freed from fear and he that is plunged in calamity becomes freed from calamity

That man, who with devotion and faith recites this hymn (of thousand names) succeeds in quickly surmounting all difficulties, in acquiring prosperity, satisfaction, memory and fame

Once Pārvatī the consort of Lord Śiva questioned her Lord—

What other substitute, very easy of reciting is equivalent to reciting the thousands names of the Lord of the Universe (Visnu)?

To this Śiva replies—

Pārvatī, better recite the following single verse three times

"rāma rāmeti rāmeti rame rāme manorame
sahasranāma tattulyam rāmanāma varānane."

And this is equivalent to reciting the entire hymns 'Visnu Sahasranāma'

And finally, may the Lord Visnu of the Universe bestow all the best of health, happiness, peace and prosperity to one and all

Om Śāntih, Śāntih, Śāntih



Lord Viṣṇu

—Brahmachari Sailesh

According to Hindus there is only one Supreme Power, Īśvara or Bhagavān, who is all powerful and omnipresent He has neither any form nor any shape but being all powerful, He can assume any form or shape according to His desire As He has no form He can be conceived only by the exceptionally spiritual people or seers But for the common man some concrete form is necessary for His worship and meditation Vaisnavas take Him to be Mahāvisnu From this originates the idea of different deities or gods, having some definite forms and names

Our Universe revolves in three phenomena—as Sṛṣṭi (Creation), Sthiti (preservation) and Laya (destruction) Hindus believe that there are three major deities responsible for each of these phenomena They are—

1 Brahmā (The creator)
2 Visnu (The preserver)
3 Śiva (The destroyer)

These three major deities are also known as trinity

Now, Lord Visnu is the preserver of this Universe He is known to Hindus by another name-Nārāyana He has a consort known as Laksmī She is the goddess of wealth Lord Visnu is worshipped singly or sometimes along with His consort

Lord Visnu is described as having four arms and in each hand He holds an emblem They are Sankha (conch), Cakra (wheel) Gadā (mace) and Padma (Lotus) He stands on a full bloomed lotus and wears a yellow robe On His head He wears a diadem (Kirīta) and His body shines as if the body is made of gold

His Vehicle is Garuda He is imagined like a winged human figure In Rgveda, he is mentioned as a celestial bird named Garutmān and also as Suparna It appears that the word Garuda is derived from Garuṭmān

In Atharvaveda Garuda is regarded as an avatāra of Lord Viṣnu, Western philosopher Keith, referring to Vaidika texts, writes that Tārksya is a bird which according to its descriptions seems similar to that of Garuda There are many legends mentioned in different Vedas and Purānas about his birth and miraculous activities He is very often depicted in sitting posture with folded hands as in a gesture of prayer

Various forms of icons of Lord Visnu are found in different parts of India In one form He is in deep slumber (Yoganidrā), lying on a bed made with the coils of a serpent (Ananta Nāga) on the surface of ocean In this form He is known as Ananta-Śāyī Visnu A lotus appears from His Navel on which Lord Brahmā, the creator, is seated, and Laksmī, Lord Visnu's consort is seated near His legs

In another form He is known as Trivikram Visnu In this form He is seen with eight hands holding different emblems This form of *iconography* is found in South India and near Vishtapura in West Bengal

In another form Lord Visnu is portrayed in the Dattātreya form Here he is represented as trinity in a single statue with all their emblems and vehicles He is also known as Hari in various parts of India, specially among the Vaisnavas

Lord Visnu's emblem is Garuda and Garuda is depicted in Visnu's flag-staff Some *panditas* are of the view that Visnu first appeared as a bird He was known as Sun bird Later on the bird split into two—He himself and His vehicle It seems that this idea cropped up considering the power and energy depicted in the legends of Purānas

Lord Visnu's followers are known as Vaisnavas They believe in three forms of Moksa They are Sārūpya—Having the same form as Lord Vísnu Himself, Sālokya residing in the same place where Lord Visnu resides and Sāyujya—being one with Him or losing ones identity in Lord Visnu



Supremacy of Lord Viṣṇu

—A Lakshmikanthan

In the world of religion Lord Visnu occupies pivotal place Vedas define Him and identify Him Various religious propounders have acknowledged Lord Viṣnu's place in their own understanding But according to Ācārya Śrī Madhva who propounded the theory of "Dvaita" or "Dvaitavāda", the identity of Lord Visnu by Śrī Madhva has surpassed the description of all other religious leaders Śrī Madhva acknowledges Lord Visṇu as the Supreme person

Definition—

The term Visnu has the root word "Vislr" meaning Vyāpti He is all pervasive and enters everything to give activity and identity for the respective things

Vedas declare that the Supreme Lord is—

"antarbahiśca tatsarvaṁ
vyāpya nārāyanah sthitaḥ"

His Role—

He is the creator of this Universe For its efficient administration and Governance, He has a retinue of Uttama Jīvas as gods, the eight types of duties like creation etc are done by Him He has decentralised His functions to various gods who are graded according to their *Yogyatā* (ability), yet He has full control over all In modern management, functions may be decentralised but the responsibility is with the boss Just like that He is the cause of everything and responsible for all and gets the things done through others.

His Description—

He is beyond Ksara and Aksara Then who He is ? He is the one and only uttamapurusa Is He devoid of attributes and Ākāra ? No He is the Ananta Kalyāna Guna Paripūrṇa He cannot be limited by any description regarding His attributes and rūpa He

is beyond description by mortals like us He can be understood only by Vedas No amount of perception or inference can help If He is described as Nirākāra or Nirguna, it only emphasizes our limitations because of our prakrti sambandha He is full of auspicious qualities He is Sarvavyāpī (omnipresent). He is Moksa dāyaka (Bestower of salvation) He is the Sustainer He is the destroyer of all at each Kalpa including *Brahmādi Devas.* He bestows knowledge. He is also the liberator. He is *Bhakta Vatsala.* He is impartial. He gives equal treatment to all. He is paramadayālu for He is the actual doer but gives credit to the person who is only an instrument.

He is the only Svatantra Puruṣa, which means that He does not depend upon anybody or on anything for His functioning. Saint Jayatīrtha has elaborated the meaning of Svatantra on the lines of Ācārya Śrī Madhva as follows: A person who does not depend upon anybody for his existence, knowledge and action, is called Svatantra, which none of us can claim including *Brahmādi Devas.* He is in everything. Yet he is detached from it

The Vaidika term Neti-Neti uttered twice is the clear indication on our limitation to know about Him completely and in trying to define Him

Why He should be contemplated—

For understanding anything, perception and inference have to be used Like that in religion also both cannot be ignored though they are helpful to the limited extent only

Therefore if we look around we see the world in its varying richness In initial levels of school learning, children are taught about living things and non-living things and what they are We also see different kinds of living things including human beings The things happening around us like sunrise and sunset, movement of various planets in their regular path clearly point to force which guides everything Earth and other planets are jadas and they cannot act on their own They require an efficient cause for their functioning

If we analyse the above situation it precipitates to three basic things viz (1) Jada padārthas (inanimate objects) (2) Jīvas (living

beings) and (3) a force controlling the two which is known as God and all are distinct from one another.

The relationship between each two of the above three will give rise to the following differences—

(1) Difference between God and Jīvas
(2) Difference between God and Jaḍa
(3) Difference between Jīva and Jada
(4) Difference between Jīva and Jīva
(5) Difference between Jada and Jada

Ācārya Śrī Madhva informs us that this world is called Prapañca because of the above basic five differences

To know means to understand the difference Therefore by knowing one thing viz God, all others will be known Therefore if we contemplate on God and try to know how we are different from Him will give the knowledge which will increase the Love towards Him We love Him, adore Him because He is without any *"Dosa"* and an embodiment of all auspicious qualities The Vedas clearly declare that such a God is Visnu

The purpose of our life is to strive for our emancipation viz Moksa Scriptures inform us that only Lord Visnu can bestow Moksa to the eligibles which was stated by none other than Lord Śiva (Mārkandeya Purāna, 9th Adhyāya)

Finally we understand from Harivamśa, the glory of Lord Visnu as—

"vede rāmāyane caiva
purāne bhārate tathā
ādāvante ca madhye ca
visnuh sarvatra gīyate"



The Concept of Viṣṇu

—*Ramachandra Mishra*

Visnu is a personification of a concept, a principle The principle is an universal one By this, we mean that the principle is not limited by space, and not bound by Time It is always true It was true in the past, true in the present and shall continue to be true in future What is difficult to comprehend, is that it will continue to be true in a frame-work when Time does not exist, divided into past, present and future It was true when time was not created, it will continue to be true when in some far distant future time does not exist The concept will hold good in a timeless state

Similarly, the concept remains true irrespective of space The concept is true in the inter-molecular space, in the space inside the atoms, in the space inside the protons, neutrons, plasma The concept exists in the intra-stellar space, the space between the planets of the solar system, in the space between the several systems which make the milky-way, in the space between many milky-ways which abound in the created universe and even beyond between the different universes which were created and will continue to be created

The principle is much larger than gravity which holds all the spatial matters in position It comprehends the principle of relativity and quantum mechanics It envelops the principle of electro-magnetic force Today, modern physicists are searching for this unified principle That theory which unifies under one umbrella all the forces, which man can think of, which he is not able to think of now and which within his limited faculties can never think of That concept is the idea of a preserving power, which permeates every atom of the visible, invisible and conceptual worlds That concept permits the universes to continue in their present states, allows the worlds to proceed to the next stage ever so slowly and gradually but inexorable till the

ultimate end, the destruction which we can think of. But it is important to remember that even after the total annihilation, when time itself is destroyed and all merge in waves of the unknown, this principle will continue to hold its sway to allow the present to merge with the past and the future simultaneously. Now, the principle is only allowing the past to shape the present and the present to form the future But it has the capacity to allow the present to enter the past, the future to go into the past, to completely abolish time

The personification of that principle is Visnu, the second and most important person of the Hindu Trinity, the mythological Triad, and no doubt, on the whole has a greater number of admirers and adorers than any other deity or attribute. He is always everywhere, in anything and at anytime

The Rg Veda has not much to say about Visnu at any rate not very much and what it says is puzzling The poets who composed the Ṛg Veda describe him as a beneficient young giant of unknown parentage (He was created of his own free will and not from anything, (svayambhūḥ, Ātmayonih), with two characteristic attributes The first of these is his three long strides and the second, his close association with Indra Very often the Ṛg Veda refers to these three strides, sometimes using the verb "Vi-kram" meaning "to step out", sometimes the adjectives "Uru-Krama" meaning "wide stepped" and "Uru-Gāya" meaning "wide going" The three steps carry Visnu across the three worlds—the earth, the sky and the heavens Some of the seers hint that the three steps symbolise the passage of the sun through the three divisions of the universe, the earth, the sky and the heavens, while a few maintain that three steps denote the sun when it rises, when it is at the zenith at mid-day and when it sets in the evening, the three sandhis, junction points Vyāsadeva writes in Mahābhārata that he is Visnu because he covered the three worlds,-"*Visnuh Vikramanāt*"

Another interpretation says that he is Visnu because of his largeness—"Vrhatvād Visnur Ucyate" largeness actually means wide permeativity, he is found every where and in everything

Again in the "Śānti Parva" of the Mahābhārata, Lord Krsna tells Pārtha, that the earth and the sky are covered by him and the coverage is wider than just that.

"vyāptā me rodasī pārtha
kāntiścābhyadhikā mama ।
kramaṇāccāpyaham pārtha
visnurityabhisaṁjñitah" ।

(Śānti 341)

Because of this large scale coverage (Vyāpti) he is called Visnu

Yet another opinion is of the view that his name seems to be derived from the root "Viś" "Viśater Vā Nuk-Pratyayāntasya rūpaṁ Viṣṇuriti". Now "Viś" means "to pervade", to stimulate "and" to "inspire" Each meaning of the verb can be correct and the word "Visnu" may mean either one or all of the meanings so derived. He pervades everything He stimulates the intelligence He inspires courage and strength

In the Rgveda, considering the second attribute of Visnu, Indra is represented as virtually powerless without Visnu's mystic services and Visnu gracefully aids Indra in his heroic deeds for the welfare of men and gods. Indra out of gratitude, respect or fear has reserved a special high place in his kingdom, which is considered unique and special and peculiar to Visnu—"Tad Visnoh Paramam Padam"

The beauty of Viṣṇu's form has been described in vivid detail by many seers, poets and ācāryas like Vālmīki, Vyāsadeva, Śankarācārya and others But the description by Vyāsadeva in Śrīmad Bhāgavata is so vivid and delightful that a recapitulation of the same here will be not out of place

It was when young prince Dhruva, insulted by his father and on the advice of his mother was proceeding to the forest to meet the omnipotent Viṣṇu when Nārada met him and told him the way to recognise Visnu

"In his lotus-like face benevolent happiness glitters His nose is lovely and the eyebrows are beautiful, his cheeks are beautiful He is more beautiful than the God of Beauty and Love He is young in age, indeed he always remains a young boy All his limbs

and even the parts of diffrent limbs are lovely to behold His lips are like petals of rose and you can detect a tinge of orange-red colour in the corners of his eyes when he glances. He is the refuge for the persons needing his help. He is the highest and best wealth for friends and relatives He fulfils all desires like the wish-fulfilling jewel. He protects them who take refuge in him and is the great store-house of kindness On the right side of his breast there is a mark of the foot of a great devotee, Bhṛgu, which is called Śrīvatsa The entire universe is filled by his undisputed power Around his neck he wears a garland of sylvan flowers, which extends below his knees In this garland there are beautiful and scented flowers which bloom in all the seasons of the year and in the middle of the garland of wild, beautiful and scented flowers one can notice the Kadamba flowers He has four arms and in his lotus-like hands he has the (Pāñcajanya) conch, the beautiful (sudarśana) disc, (Kaumodakī) mace and a lotus respectively. On his head glitters the crown, studded with rare and coloured gems Ear-rings in the shape of crocodile shine on his large beautiful ears On his arms the armlets and on his wrists shine thick bangles which are studded with shining gems On his neck a lotus-coloured gem called Kaustubha shines and enhances the beauty of the neck He wears a soft yellow coloured cloth which is lovely and the same yellow garb covers his upper portion of the body On his waist line the beauty of folded cloth is very lovely On his ankles jewelled golden anklets ring melodiously He cannot be described, sufficient is it to say that he is more attractive than all the beautiful sights of all the three worlds Though he is as attractive as described, an indescribable calm and peace emanates from him. Hence if anyone sees him only once, the thirst persists in the viewer's mind and eyes to see him again and again for many more times Viṣṇu lightly places his lotus feet beautified with his gem-like nails on the petals of lotus of the heart of anyone who worships him with devotion and sincerity and also stays in the worshipper's inner being When he kindly glances towards the devotee, then a soft smile adores his lips and deep affection fills his eyes "

Arjuna actually witnessed such a rare and enchantingly beautiful view of Visnu when Śrīkrsna took him on a mission to restore a dead child of a Brāhmana

Visnu is thus personified by the poets and seers, though in essence he represents a concept, a principle which encompasses and unifies all the known and unknown concepts and theories In the Āsana Mantra, it is said that "*Devi, tvam Visnunā dhṛtā*" The world is held in place by Visnu This clearly indicates that Visnu is a principle, much greater and larger than 'Ṛta' and 'Satya' the orders which keep the universes functioning as per the will and order of Visṇu Visnu was personified by the *Purāṇas like* Bhāgavata etc , but not during the Vaidika times, no, not even during the aupaniṣadika times

It is said in the Brāhmanas that Viṣnu is the sacrifice—*'yajño vai Viṣnuh'* Visṇu is here treated as the embodied spirit of the sacrificial rites In the "Purusa Sūkta",the Purusa is described as the sacrifice and on his sacrifice, the creation and the created beings came out from the different parts of his body Indeed any work efficiently done without any desire for return and with devotion is a sacrifice Here the principle which guides the individual to rise above himself and act without selfishness but with humility is called Visnu Everyday some of us at some moment or other do act without selfishness and with humility and the world exists due to such equanimity only The world does not exist because of wielding of power and spending of large money by a few powerful and rich men, it continues to exist because the principle which guides the common man to act without selfishness at sometime of the day or the other That is the principle of preservation or equanimity or Visnu and this is an universal principle, beyond the frame work of space-time and object



Uniqueness of Viṣṇu

सद्यः प्रसादरुषितान् विधिशङ्करादीन्
केचिद्विभो निजगुणानुगुणं भजन्तः ।
भ्रष्टा भवन्ति बत कष्टमदीर्घदृष्ट्या
स्पष्टं वृकासुर उदाहरणं किलास्मिन् ॥

O Lord ! There are people who, following the promptings of their own nature, worship Brahmā and Śiva who are as quick to be provoked as they are to be propitiated Alas ! they pay for this short-sightedness with downfall The case of Vṛkāsura is a clear instance in point

शकुनिजः स तु नारदमेकदा त्वरिततोषमपृच्छदधीश्वरम् ।
स च दिदेश गिरीशमुपासितुं न तु भवन्तमबन्धुमसाधुषु ॥

Vṛkāsura, the son of Śakuni, once asked Nārada which Deity was the easiest to propitiate The sage instructed him in the worship of Śiva and not of Thee, who dost never support evil ones

तपस्तप्त्वा घोरं स खलु कुपितः सप्तमदिने
शिरश्छित्वा सद्यः पुरहरमुपस्थाप्य पुरतः ।
अतिक्षुद्रं रौद्रं शिरसि करदानेन निधनं
जगन्नाथाद्वव्रे भवति विमुखानां क्व शुभधीः ॥

Practising severe austerities for seven days (and yet failing to see Śiva), the Asura, in great anger, was about to cut off his own head (and sacrifice it in the fire), when Śiva presented himself before him From that great Lord of the universe, he sought a mean and horrible boon that any person on whose head he placed his hand, should die immediately How can one expect any good sense in people who are averse to Thy worship ?

मोक्तारं बन्धमुक्तो हरिणपतिरिव प्राद्रवत्सोऽथ रुद्रं
दैत्याद् भीत्या स्म देवो दिशि दिशि वलते पृष्ठतो दत्तदृष्टिः ।
तूष्णीके सर्वलोके तव पदमधिरोक्ष्यन्तमुद्वीक्ष्य शर्वं
दूरादेवाग्रतस्त्वं पटुवटुवपुषा तस्थिषे दानवाय ॥

Just as a lion, when released from his cage, would first rush at the person who releases him, the Asura (wanting to test his newly acquired power on Śiva himself), chased him. Fleeing from the Asura, Śiva raced through all the worlds, with a constant backward look at the pursuing Asura. As all the worlds watched this in helpless silence, Thou, noticing from a great distance, that Śiva was making for thy abode, didst confront the Asura in the guise of a smart Brahmacārī (and addressed him thus),

भद्रं ते शाकुनेय भ्रमसि किमधुना त्वं पिशाचस्य वाचा
सन्देहश्चेन्मदुक्तौ तव किमु न करोष्यङ्गुलीमङ्ग मौलौ ।
इत्थं त्वद्वाक्यमूढः शिरसि कृतकरः सोऽपतच्छिन्नपातं
भ्रंशो ह्येवं परोपासितुरपि च गतिः शूलिनोऽपि त्वमेव ॥

'Hail unto you, O son of Śakuni ! Why trouble yourself by running about in vain, putting faith in the (absurd) words of this ghost of a fellow (Piśāca) ? If you doubt my word, why not test it by placing your hands on your own head ? Befooled by these words of Thine, he put his hands on his own head, and fell down dead like an uprooted tree. Such downfall is the fate of people who adore other deities. What is more, Thou art the ultimate refuge of even Śiva.

भृगुं किल सरस्वतीनिकटवासिनस्तापसा-
स्त्रिमूर्तिषु समादिशन्नधिकसत्त्वतां वेदितुम् ।
अयं पुनरनादरादुदितरुद्धरोषे विधौ
हरेऽपि च जिहिंसिषौ गिरिजया धृते त्वामगात् ॥

The ascetics residing on the banks of the Sarasvatī once sent the sage Bhrgu (one of Brahmā's sons) to test who among the Trimurtis (Brahmā, Visnu and Śiva) was the most holy and spiritual. When the sage showed no proper respect to Brahmā, the latter grew very angry with him at first but controlled himself on second thought. Next Bhrgu behaved similarly towards Śiva, who (being mightily angry) would have killed that sage but for Pārvatī's intercession. Finally the sage reached Thee

सुप्तं रमाङ्कभुवि पङ्कजलोचनं त्वां
विप्रे विनिघ्नति पदेन मुदोत्थितस्त्वम् ।

सर्वं क्षमस्व मुनिवर्य भवेत् सदा मे
त्वत्पादचिह्नमिह भूषणमित्यवादीः ॥

When Bhrgu kicked Thee, the lotus-eyed, on Thy chest whilst thou wert asleep resting Thy head on Ramā's lap, Thou didst rise up in good humour, apologised to him (for negligence in properly receiving a holy personage like him), and declared that the mark of the sage's kick would ever remain a decoration on Thy chest

निश्चित्य ते च सुदृढं त्वयि बद्धभावाः
सारस्वता मुनिवरा दधिरे विमोक्षम् ।
त्वामेवमच्युत पुनश्च्युतिदोषहीनं
सत्त्वोच्चयैकतनुमेव वयं भजामः ॥

Those Rsis staying on the banks of Sarsvatī understood from the experience of sage Bhṛgu that Thou art the greatest Divinity, and by practising firm devotion to Thee, they attained liberation. O Lord! Thou Eternal One! I too am worshipping the undecaying form of Pure Spirit that Thou art

जगत्सृष्ट्यादौ त्वां निगमनिवहैर्वन्दिभिरिव
स्तुतं विष्णो सच्चित्परमरसनिर्द्वैतवपुषम् ।
परात्मानं भूमन् पशुपवनिताभाग्यनिवहं
परीतापश्रान्त्यै पवनपुरवासिन् परिभजे ॥

O All-pervading One! O Infinite Being! O Resident of this Temple of Guruvayūr ! In the beginning of creation, just as minstrels awaken kings with songs of praise, the Vedas (embodied as Devatās) sang hymns in praise of Thee, describing Thee as one with the Supreme non-dual Bliss-Consciousness Thou who wert thus praised and who art the embodiment of the spiritual merits of the Gopikās of Vrndāvana—I adore Thee for the eradication of all spiritual and physical afflictions

— *Nārāyaṇīyam*



Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu in early Indian Art

—Prof K D Bajpai

Viṣnu is one of the chief deities, who find mention in the Rgveda and in the later Vaidika texts. Visnu was, in course of time, identified with the supreme Lord Nārāyana, signifying the combined traits of *Rta* and *Satya* He is eulogized as such in the two great epics and particularly in the early Purānas The ten incarnations of Visnu are indicative of his supremacy and all-pervasiveness

Among the ten incarnations of Visnu, Rāma and Krsna became comparatively more popular than others They signified the cultural ethos of the country in a broad-based way

In early Indian art Vāsudeva-Krsna and Viṣṇu were combined together The earliest large size image of Vāsudeva-Visnu has been discovered at Malhar in the Bilasapur district of Madhya Pradesh It is an inscribed image bearing ạ Brāhmī inscription of the 2nd century B C The form of the image and the āyudhas, held in the four hands, tally with the description of Vāsudeva-Visnu in the Bhagavadgītā.

The literary and archaeological source-material furnishes evidence to the worship of Vāsudeva Krsna in a very early period In the Astādhyāyī of Pānini (about c 500 B.C), traces of the worship of Vāsudeva are discernible[1] The commentator Patañjali (2nd century B C) refers to the *'Vāsudevakas'* (followers of Vāsudeva Krsna) [2]In his work *Mahābhāsya* mention is made of the temples of Keśava, Rāma (Balarāma) and Kubera, which were in existence during his time The references in the *Mahābhāsya* to the dramatic performances of *Balivandhana, Kamsa-vadha,* etc are also noteworthy.

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1 Astādhyāyī (IV 3 68)

2 This is confirmed by other sources also, such as the Buddhist works *Niddesa* and *Milindapañha*

The *Mahābhārata*, the *Harıvamśa*, the *Purānas* and some other early works contain ınteresting accounts of Kṛṣṇa's life On account of hıs various extraordınary acts he came to be regarded as a dıvine beıng, born for the upliftment of rıghteousness and for destruction of the evıl

He was ıdentified wıth the supreme beıng Nārāyana and Viṣṇu, one of the chief Vaidıka deıtıes, whose traıts emınently existed in Kṛṣṇa. The *Mahābhārata* (VIII.4.39) calls Kṛṣṇa *'Nārāyaṇa-Gopa'*. The *Harivaṁśa* (II.25.21) gives the designation 'Gopaveṣa Viṣṇu' to Kṛṣṇa. Thıs work also describes Kṛṣṇa as two-handed, bearing the *āyudhas*, *cakra* and *gadā* in each of his hands[1].

The early forms of this deity, found in the stone sculptures in several parts of the country can be said to represent Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu The earliest stone image of the deity from Malhar is a life size statue carved in the round, similar to the archaic statues of Agni and the Yakṣas. It stands erect *(samabhaṅga)* on a stone pedestal. The upper part of the deity is bare. The lower part wears a garment of palm leaves, indicating ıts *gopa-veṣa* of Mathura.[2] The head wears a crown, which ıs much mutılated. It was formed of leaves and flowers. One of the right hands holds a heavy *mace* and the left holds a *cakra*. The rest two hands hold a *conch*,[3] which is also dısfıgured due to the chisellıng of the upper portion of the ımage at the hands of some miscreants. There ıs a small sword attached to the waıst on the left

The image is ınscrıbed in the Mauryan Brāhmī scrıpt. The one line inscrıption incısed on the *mace* is very well preserved. The ınscrıptıon states that the image was caused to be made by one

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1 *Harıvaṁśa* (II 25 26)

2 Kālıdāsa ın hıs *Meghadūta* (1 15) gıves an ınterestıng descrıptıon of thıs form of Krsna

3 In the early ımages of Vāsudeva-Vısnu, obtaıned from Malhar, Mathura, Pawaya and some other sıtes, the deıty ıs shown wearıng *Kırīta-mukuta* He holds generally hıs three chıef *āyudhas*, *cakra*, *gadā* and *śankha* Cf hıs descrıptıon ın the Gītā (XI 17 & 46)

किरीटिन गदिन चक्रिण च तेजोराशि सर्वतो दीप्तिमन्तम्।
किरीटिन गदिनं चक्रहस्तमिच्छामि त्वा द्रष्टुमहं तथैव।
तेनैव रूपेण चतुर्भुजेन सहस्रबाहो भव विश्वमूर्ते॥

lady Bhāradvājā, wife of Parṇadatta[1] This image from Malhar is the most remarkable early representation of Vāsudeva-Visṇu, having four hands For the study of evolution of the iconography of this deity, it is extremely important

A few rare coins of the Indo-Greek ruler Agathocles (2nd century B C.) have recently been discovered at Ai-Khanum in Afghanistan[2]. The obverse of these coins shows Lord Krṣṇa standing and holding prominent *cakra* in his left hand A big sheathed sword hangs from his waist and to the left The *chatra* (parasol) over his head is also of palm leaves The name of the ruler is written in the Aśokan Brāhmī as *Agathuklayesa* On the reverse of the coin is shown standing Balarāma He holds a *hala* in the raised right hand and a *mūsala* in the raised left hand The sword is shown hanging from the left side. The palm leaf parasol over his head is slightly smaller than that of Krsna The Greek legend on the reverse reads *Basileos Agathocleos*

The similarities of several features noted in the Malhar image and the figure of Krsṇa on the coins of Agathocles are remarkable indeed

It may be pointed out here that the three *āyudhas,* viz. *cakra, gadā* and *asi* associated with Krsna signify his valour of a great warrior *Śankha* (conch) represents his victory over the evil forces These attributes and his chivalrous deeds are noticeable in the images of Vāsudeva-Visnu discovered at Mathura, Bhitargaon, Śrāvastī, Deogarh, Garhwa, Eran, Paharpur, Khajuraho, Mandor, Badami and several other sites of the country

Scholars have generally thought that the cult images of Krsna are conspicuously lacking in early Indian art But the fact has to be emphasised that the so-called early Visnu images, found in different parts of the country, represent essentially the Vāsudeva form of the deity A correct designation for these images can be

1 For details see K D Bajpai *Malhar* (Sagar, 1978), p 27, plate 10

2 See A K Narain's article in *Jnsi* , Vol 35 (1973) pp 73-77, also Doris Srinivasan in *Archives of Asian Art,* Vol 32 (1979), pp 39—54, fig 23-24

that of Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu The majority of these images are four-handed. A few images of the Kuṣāna period from Mathura show him eight-handed holding various *āyudhas* in the hands. Some images are only two-handed, indicating the human aspect of the deity

Indian plastic and pictorial art sumptuously depicts Kṛṣṇa's early life of Vraja in its variegated forms His life of Kurukṣetra, Dwaraka and other places finds much less place in the rich art traditions.

The inscriptional evidence pertaining to the subject is of considerable importance. The stone inscriptions from Ghosundi and Nagari in Rajasthan clearly indicate that the cult images and temples of Vāsudeva existed about 200 B C This tradition may have started there even earlier The well known Besnagar pillar inscription shows that a temple of this deity existed in Vidisa in the 2nd century B C The evidence of the Mathura records indicates that the institution of the five heroes of the Vṛṣnis had been established in that region in the early Śunga period. Vidisa had close cultural and commercial contacts with Mathura. The early Vāsudeva cult at both the centres had much in common with each other The Mandsaur inscription (dated Vikrama Saṁ 461) of king Naravarman offers an excellent eulogy to the great god Vāsudeva—Krsna

Mathura was the chief centre of early Bhāgavatism in North India The region of Mathura has yielded important stone inscriptions which throw welcome light on the subject Two inscriptions of the time of Mahākṣatrapap Śodāsa (Ist century B C) refer to the construction of a shrine for Vāsudeva-Visnu along with the excavation of a tank, creation of a reservoir, a garden, railing and gateway, a pillar and stone statue by a person called Mūlavasu, who was the treasurer of king Śodāsa of Mathura This temple of Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu is one of the earliest such structures built up in honour of this deity.

A new stone inscription has recently been discovered near a hamlet called Mirjapur in the southern outskirts of the present Mathura town The inscription is incised in large and bold Brāhmī

letters The record mentions that a lady named Paksakā, who was the wife of Mūlavasu, treasurer of king Śodāsa, caused the excavation of a water tank and also the creation of a garden, an assembly hall, a well, a pillar and a slab bearing the image of Śrī (Laksmī) The new inscription shows that the image of Laksmī was installed near the shrine of Vāsudeva-Visṇu This new inscription furnishes a significant evidence, indicating that the cult images of Vāsudeva-Visnu and Śrī Laksmī and their shrines were known together in Mathura during the Ist century B C

During the Ksatrapa-Kusāna hegemony in Mathura, much advancement was made in the sculptural art. Images of deities like Vāsudeva, Laksmī, Vasudhārā, Śiva, Kubera, etc, were made A recently discovered stone inscription from Mathura refers to the worship of God Maheśvara (Śiva) It is written in the Kusāna Brāhmī script and records the gift of a water tank, garden, assembly-hall, stone tablet and a temple (of Śiva) by one Kautsīputra Māgaka This is a very early reference to the temple of Maheśvara (Śiva) at Mathura The description of the objects created at the spot is similar to that found in other inscriptions mentioned above The inscribed slabs, referred to above, are now preserved in the State Museum, Mathura



What wonder if sins get dissolved through Kīrtana of that immortal and infallible Being who blocks the way to hell for him who fixes his mind and Intellect on Him, whose meditation is so absorbing that he who gets addicted to it or develops a taste for it looks upon the bliss of heaven as an impediment and will not be prepared to exchange it even with the abode of *Brahma* (the highest region in this creation of *Māyā*, even higher than Indra's paradise) and who entering the mind of pure souls grants them salvation

—*Visnu Purāna*



Vaiṣṇava Upaniṣads and Purāṇas

There are fourteen upanisads called as Vaiṣnava. They are reckoned as following—

1 Avyaktopanisad.
2 Kalisantaranopanisad.
3. Kṛsnopaniṣad.
4. Gopālatāpinī Upaniṣad.
5 Garuḍopanisad.
6. Tārasāropanisad
7. Tripādvibhūtimahānārāyaṇopaniṣad.
8. Dattātreyopaniṣad
9. Nārāyanopaniṣad
10. Nrsimhatāpinī Upaniṣad
11. Rāmatāpinī Upanisad
12. Paramarahasyopanisad.
13. Vāsudevopaniṣad
14. Hayagrīvopanisad

In the Śiva Rahasya Khanda of Skanda Purāna, only four Purānas are mentioned as Vaiṣṇava—

1 Visnu Purāna
2 Bhāgavata Purāna
3 Nāradīya Purāna
4 Garuda Purāna

विष्णोर्हि वैष्णवं तद्य तथा भागवतं तथा।
नारदीयं पुराण च गारुडं वैष्णवं विदुः ॥

—Sambhava Kânda II 33.34

(Nagendra Nātha Vasu's Hindī Viśva Kosa)



The Glory of the Names—Acyuta, Ananta and Govinda

An attempt to write anything about the glory of the Divine Name is as it were to hold a torch to the refulgent sun. Our śrutis, smṛtis, histories, scriptures and philosophies etc., verily sing the glory of the Divine Names. The appellations of God are in fact as endless as His attributes. Various are the compilations that include some of the most prevalent Names. The glory of the names Acyuta, Ananta and Govinda—it has been mentioned by Lord Śankara and Dhanvantari, that these names are capable of warding off even death and their Japa (reverent repetition) keeps away all diseases and sorrows etc —

अच्युतानन्तगोविन्द इति नामत्रयं हरेः ।
यो जपेत् प्रयतो भक्त्या प्रणवाद्यं नमोऽन्तकम् ॥
तस्य मृत्युभयं नास्ति विषरोगाग्निजं महत् ।
× × × × ×
कालमृत्युभयं चापि तस्य नास्ति किमन्यतः ॥

(Padma Purāna, Uttarakhanda, 260 19—21)

अच्युतानन्तगोविन्दनामोच्चारणभेषजात् ।
नश्यन्ति सकला रोगाः सत्यं सत्यं वदाम्यहम् ॥

(Dhanvantari)

The method of reciting these Names in the form of divine formula has been described in the Nārada Purāṇa Now a short description of the characters of the names referred to above is being attempted at in the following lines

Acyuta—Out of the above Names this one denotes that the Lord never deviates from His firm stand This Name occurs thrice in the Gītā—

'रथं स्थापय मेऽच्युत' (1 21)

'एकोऽथवाप्यच्युत' (11 42)

'नष्टो मोहः स्मृतिर्लब्धा त्वत्प्रसादान्मयाच्युत।' (18 73)

If we closely examine the second and the third verses cited above we get a glimpse of the feeling of repentance born in Arjuna's heart and at the time of gaining at the knowledge of truth, the feeling of devotion or dedication born as a result of Divine compassion

The name 'Acyuta' seems to be vested with a power of attracting Divine compassion Both the hyms known as 'Acyutāstaka' composed by Śrī Śaṅkarācāryajī, are vested with inconceivable powers. Out of these two the 'Śrīmad Acyutāṣṭaka opens with the words ''अच्युताच्युत हरे परमात्मन्' and through its recitation people are said to have attained wonderful success Through its recitation persistent troubles caused by evil spirits, uncommon anxieties and sorrows are said to have been wiped

Ananta—The name 'Ananta' denotes the all pervasiveness of the Lord.

Govinda—Govinda is also one of the popular names Its glory has been described in the Padma Purāna Only through the repetition of that Name one gets rid of the evils of all sins and the ailments pertaining to the body and mind as well and one attains the Supreme State-(Padma Purāṇa, Srṣṭi Khanda) 'भुञ्जन् कीर्तय गोविन्दम्' draws our attention to the fact that the name Govinda should be recalled even when one takes one's meals It also shows that the remembrance of Govinda has the queer power of digesting food The keeping up a good appetite verily leads to good health

The name 'Govinda' has the special power of protecting those who are stricken with terror Draupadī had addressed the Lord as Govinda, the dweller of Dwārakā. for the safeguard of her modesty In the battle of Kuruksetra Arjuna too had once addressed the Lord with the same name—'किं नो राज्येन गोविन्द' (1.31) Bhagavān Śankarācārya also, exhorting the ignorant advised them to constantly repeat the name Govinda—'भज गोविन्द भज गोविन्द गोविन्द भज मूढमते।' Thus if we look upon analytically on the above

three names we shall find that they have their respective importance but if they are conjoined the sum total of their importance increases all the more If these names are preceded by the holy syllable 'Om' and followed by 'नम' or if the verse quoted by Dhanvantari himself is treated as a divine formula and practised as a religious vow, one can be benefited in this world and the world hereafter

—Adapted from 'Kalyana'



धन्य धन्य माता पिता, धन्य पुत्रबर सोइ। तुलसी जो रामहिं भजे, जैसे-केसेहु होइ ॥
तुलसी जाके बदनतें, धोखेहुँ निकसै राम। ताके पगकी पगतरी, मोरे तनुको चाम ॥
तुलसी भगत स्वपच भलो, निसिदिन सुमिरै राम। ऊँचो कुल केहि कामको, जहाँ न हरिको नाम ॥
अति ऊँचे भूधरनिपर, भुजगनके अस्थान। तुलसी अति नीचे सुखद, ऊख अन्न अरु पान ॥

Goswāmī Tulasīdāsa says—
Blessed the son, and blessed his parents,
Who remember Śrī Rāma in whatsoever way it may be
He who utters the Name of Rāma even through mistake,
Let him wear a pair of shoes made of the skin of my body !
Blessed is the pariah who is a devotee of God and remembers Him day and night,
Of what avail is high birth to one who does not practise the Name of Hari ?
The highest mountain-peaks give shelter only to snakes,
Blessed are the sugar-cane, the corn and betel leaves that flourish in lowlands and give delight to all



A Logical Exposition of Viṣṇu

—*R P Saxena*

"namo hiranyagarbhāya haraye śankarāya ca;
vāsudevāya tārāya sargasthityantakāriṇe "

(Visnu Purāṇa 1 2 2)

The concept of Viṣnu, as something other than a mere "All-powerful God," suddenly creeps up in the mind of a cautious reader, when some of the ślokas of Visnu Purāna (viz. Chap. 1,2 and 3 or part 1, Chap. 8 and 9 of part 2. Chapter 1 of part 3 and Chap. 4 of part 6, which are reproduced in appendix hereto), are read together. These ślokas immediately convey to the reader, the concept of Visnu as a particular Astronomic Deity, Chapter 8 of part 2 is concerned with other astronomic bodies, such as the Sun, the Naksatras etc, and Chapter 9 of part 2 is itself titled "Jyotiścakra" Again, Chapter 2 and 3 of Part I, discuss the evolution of the universe, nay the Cosmos-the Brahmāṇda The above quoted Śloka lays emphasis. on the quality of the gods to evolve, sustain and cause an end to all In Śloka 1.1 31-(1) and 1 2 24-(2) are discussed the evolution of the Universe, from the Nebulae of a Puruṣa, or Pradhāna. where a balance of the three elements of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas are centered We are reminded here of the modern concept of a Black Hole in space—where the projected Universe is gulped down to nought The contexts as above mentioned, of such astronomic descriptions—wherein Visṇu is called as the pivot, around which all the Cosmos, the Brahmāṇda, revolves. seems to have been well supported with some astronomical studies also And moreover, this concept of Viṣṇu as an Astronomic Deity, is further fortified when we remember that the author of Viṣṇupurāna, is Vyāsa Pārāśara—the noted Astrologist of Hindu Mythology

2 This concept is well correlated with another concept of Viṣṇu as Kāla (as Macrotime), which is suggested in Śloka 1.2 24-(2) but which, originated with very very fine measurements of time, starting with the Nimisa (i e the period taken in pronouncing a vowel) From Nimisa to Muhūrta, and then to a day and an "Earthly Year" is well known. But then, there arise the Macro-concepts of a "Divine-Year," "Kalpa", and lastly the "Para" The two "Ayanas" on earth (i e the Uttarāyana and Daksināyana) make only one Divine Day, and such 360 days go to make a Divine Year 12000 such divine years make one Caturyuga (wherein each Yuga has a varying number of Divine Years—Satyayuga has 4000 Divine Years, Tretā has 3000 Divine Years, Dvāpara has 2000 Divine years and Kaliyuga has 1000 Divine Years—but each Yuga is also preceded and also succeeded with Sandhyās of equal centuries of Divine Years (See Śloka 1.3 10 to 13)-(3) Thus, one Caturyuga has total 12000 Divine years This concept of Kāla does not end at Kalpa (which means 1000 Caturyugas) The Kalpa is also divided in 14 Manvantaras (i e periods of each Manu thus presuming the existence of 14 Manus in one Kalpa) Each Manvantara has 71 Caturyugas and something more Again this Kalpa is said to be the life-span of one Dhruva (meaning the star Polaris) Further it (the Kalpa) is the period of one day of Brahmā, which with an equal period for the night, go to make a Brāhma Year—and such 100 Brāhma Years make the life of one Brahmā (See Ślokas 1 3 18-28)-(4) The concept of Kāla is then further stretched to the Day of Viṣṇu—as being equal to 2 Parārdhas, or one Para Here, we stop—because the Visnu-Year is not discussed. Of course, this we may presume to be the limit of comprehensions of man at the time (Ślokas 6 4 47,48), (5)

3 The correlation—as mentioned above of Visnu as Kāla is just like the correlation of heavenly bodies with the concept of days and years (and then of minor subdivisions of time, as is known so well) When a Day or Year is mentioned, we know too well that a day is caused by the Rotation of a heavenly body, which is receiving illumination from another heavenly body

A year means the Revolation of such a rotating body, around another heavenly body Now in Viṣṇupurāna, the days discussed are the Divine Day, the Brāhma-day, and the Visnu-day. The concept of Visnu-day both must have been based on a presumption that Brahmā and Viṣṇu are astronomical identities. As for the Divine Day, this must have been assumed from the misconceived notion of those times, that Sun revolves around Earth Of course, it is discussed in the Visnupurāna that Sun, never sets, and other things as well, to convey the impression that they did know about the earth's revolution around Sun, but, we must deduce that from the exigency of presenting their observations in a colloquial language, understood by the common man's belief about Sun's revolution, they thought fit to present their astronomical deductions based on a divine Day composed of the 2 "Ayanas" on Earth Hence, Divine Day should not be taken to imply rotation Instead, it is just like the method of computing distances in terms of "Light-years" to-day As a result, what we should take it to mean is that one year on Earth, is equal to one day of the Divine Year, which comprises of such 360 days The concepts of Caturyuga and Manvantara need logical analysis also, because both these concepts recur in a cycle and thus suggest rotation and revolution But on deeper examination, the 2 certainly do not appear related to rotation or revolution, for No Day exists But, the two concepts of a Kalpa and a Para-which are mentioned as the periods each of a Brāhma Day and a Visnu Day, do certainly relate to the rotation and revolution of the two entities called Brahmā and the Visnu

4 Now, we may grope in the dark to find a meaning to the Caturyuga concept, which is made more incomprehensible because each yuga in a Caturyuga is defined as having a different time-span. Since, the Yugas appear in cycles, we may be misled into believing that here again a rotary or revolutionary system may be involved We assume such a Non-eventuality, because firstly, as said above, this concept is not related to the concept of a Day, and secondly, no other heavenly body between the Sun and the Dhruva (Polaris) is mentioned, around which the Sun

could have revolved Incidentally, we may remind ourselves that this space between Sun and the Dhruva is called in Purānas, as "Svarloka" Within this space or Svarloka, the Moon, the Naksatras, the Mercury, the Venus, the Mars, the Jupiter the Saturn and the Saptarsimandala (or Big Bear) are revolving around the Dhruva (Polaris) (Now, Modern astronomy places the above, except the Big Bear, as between Sun and Earth). Śloka 2.9 2 (6) declares that sun revolves around the Dhruva, alongwith these other bodies Now, we know that modern Astronomy also has come around to the view that the Sun revolves (though not around the Polaris), and the period of one revolution is 25 crore years This period is somewhat akin to that of a Manavantara (30,67,20,000 years—Śloka 1 3 20-(7) Hence, logic says that we accept the Manvantara as the period of revolution by Sun of Polaris, the difference being not noticed, for the reason that miscalculations may exist either way Now, according to Śloka 1 3.18 (4), this period of Manvantara, is equal to 71 Caturyugas, thus we may compute a Caturyuga as being the span of 5 degrees and some minutes on the revolutionary path of the Sun around Dhruva Again, 1000 Caturyugas make for one day of Brahmā, which is also said to be equal to the period of 14 Manvantaras (plus some odd Caturyugas, of course) Now, Ślokas 2 8 42 (8) and 2 9 2 (6) suggest that Dhruva is also rotating, though we are nowhere told, that It does revolove here, we may proceed on the theory that heavenly bodies can stay in their place only if they rotate and revolve—for then alone can they withstand the pull of other heavenly bodies Knowing that after Dhruva, only Brahmā is mentioned, we may logically presume that Dhruva revolves around Brahmā Now, the 14 Manvantaras may mean the 14 revolutions around Brahmā by Dhruva, which rotates in one Manvantara, (and thus, for the earth and the Sun, Dhruva seems stationary at its place, because, it is also the period of Sun's revolution around it) Else where, we find also mention of 14 Bhuvanas (or Lokas)-perhaps, this may mean the 14 positions of Dhruva around the Brahmā

5 Still, the logical explanations for a Caturyuga and for

varifying periods of each yuga, are left up to be explained Having accepted the Sun's revolving path around the Dhruva as Manvantara (composed of 71 Caturyugas), we can deduce a Caturyuga as an Arc of this revolving path (of Sun-around Dhruva) based at an angle of 5 4' 9" at the centre (i e the Dhruva) As for variation in the time span of each yuga, the following explanation, based on recent knowledge gained about earth's magnetism, craves for acceptance

6 The different time span of each Yuga within a Caturyuga, may be due to variation of speeds of earth's revolution around Sun, in each yuga This may have been the result of a variance in the Sun's pull on the earth in each yuga, or a result of a variance in the pull exerted on earth by other heavenly bodies Thirdly, this may have been a result of a cyclical change of Earth's axis after every said yuga Now, there is a new discovery that earth's magnetic axis has changed in ascertainable past, i e before 4 Lakh years, 7 Lakh years, 24 Lakh years, 33 Lakh years and 53 Lakh years Perhaps this must have been associated with change in Earth's axis also Modern science has assumed the following facts which go to confirm the theory of speed variation in earth's revolution—

(a) Originally, the speed of earth's rotation was only 4-5 hours

(b) Magnetic North of earth's rocks is discoverd to have changed regularly, as shown by different magnetic rocks in the earth's crust The periods of such changes, as mentioned above though not strictly correlate with the 4 3 2 1 proportion of the 4 Yugas, yet they lead us logically to such an eventuality. The difference may be due to errors on either side

7 To summarise, the Kāla (the Macrotime) distributions may be related to Astronomical Deities as follows—

Śloka	Kāla Distributions	Relative period	Modern Science Estimations
×	(i) Life of Visnu (So presumed	100 Years of Visnu composed	×

Śloka	Kāla Distributions	Relative period	Modern Science Estimations
	only, because there must be a revolution by the rotating body)	of 360 Days of Visnu	
6 4 47	(ii) 1 Day of Visnu	One Para of Brahmā or 7,20,00,000 Caturyuga of earth or (1000 +1000) Caturyuga × 360 × 100 yrs of Brahmā	
6 4 48	(iii) 1 Night of Visnu	One Para as above	
1 3 26	(iv) Life of Brahmā	One Para or 100 years of Brahmā or 7,20,00,000 Caturyuga of earth (as at (ii) above)	
1 3 26	(v)1 Year of Brahmā (or One Revolution by Astronomical Body 'Brahmā' around Astronomical body Viṣnu)	(1000+1000) Caturyuga × 360 days of Brahmā =7,20,000 earthly Caturyuga	
1 3 15—22	(vi) 1 Day of Brahmā (i e 1/2 rotation by Astronomical Body Brahmā)	Life of Dhruva or one Kalpa or 14 Manvantra or 1000 Caturyuga or 4,32,00,00,000 earthly years	Life of earth estimated as 4,50,00,00,000 years ago

Śloka	Kāla Distributions	Relative period	Modern Science Estimations
1 3 15—22	(vii) 1 Night of Brahmā (i e 1/2 rotation by Astronomical body Brahmā)	do	×
1.3 15—22	(viii) Life of Manu or one Manvantara	71 Caturyuga or one rotation of Polaris or one Revolution of Polaris by Sun or 30,68,20,000 earthly years	Sun's revolution estimated as 25,00,00,000 years
1 3 11—14	(ix) Caturyuga	Four Yugas of Sat, Tretā, Dvāpara Kaliyuga with proportional periods as 4 3 2 1 or 12000 Divine years or 43,20,000 Earthly years	Rock changes after four Lakh years, 7 Lakh Years, 24 Lakh years, 33 Lakh years and 53 Lakh years
1 3 11	(x) Divine year	360 yrs on Earth	×
1 3 10	(xi) Divine Day	2 Ayanas of Earth or 1 year on earth	×

8 We here see in the above chart, that three assumptions of modern science, are something nearly equal to those "Imagined" by astronomists of ancient India This further confirms the presumption that Viṣṇu must not be only a Religious and Imagined Deity, but must have been thought out logically as an Astronomical Body, from which the whole Cosmos was Projected

9. Now another aspect of this concept of Viṣnu, is hereby examined The literal meaning of "Viṣṇu" has been explained in Śloka 3 1.45 as—

This whole cosmos is covered with the power of the Super God and therefore, He is called Visṇu, because "Viś"- the original word—means to enter "

यस्माद्विष्टमिदं विश्वं तस्य शक्त्या महात्मनः ।
तस्मात्स प्रोच्यते विष्णुर्विशेर्धातोः प्रवेशनात् ॥

Thus, the word Visnu, implies, the inherent existence of "It' in any object on earth or in space,. If the Visṇu is an astronomical Body, of course, this literal meaning will convey no sense whatsoever, Now, Śloka 1.2 24 of Visṇupurāṇa, gives another meaning to the word Visṇu-that, it is Synonym with Avyakta or Pradhāna or Purusa This Pradhāna/Purusa is not the cause of, but is a witness of Nature's projection into Cosmos (Brahmāṇda) Reading the two concepts together, one should readily grasp the underlying idea behind, which justifies both the meanings given to Visṇu This underlying idea is that the Astronomical Identity Visnu, is something beyond definition (Avyakta) and that while it did exist before anything existed in cosmos, it will also continue to exist till after the cosmos has shrunk back into the Black Hole (so to say) or till after Pralaya It does not cause any creation, and yet is omnipresent in every object on earth and in space. This omnipresence may not mean the physical presence of It, but that its power, or its properties, are inherent in every such object Here, we may compare the properties of Magnet which though itself not present in the attracted Iron pieces, yet, has its Action field, whereunder the Iron pieces inhabit the properties of a magnet We are also reminded here, of the concept of "Electrons" which even to-day, modern science has failed to define in minute detail, but whose properties are now well established This Electron is said to exist in every object (dead or alive), and though, it has a negative charge, yet their mobility is the greatest Some notings about these Electrons are as follows, and one may really wonder how these properties are similar to the praises sung on God Visnu

(a) The negative charge of the electrons, forces them to move towards metal plate connected to a positive terminal of a source of electricity. Under action of external forces, electrons gain their freedom They part with their Atoms, flying off their outer orbits

(b) It (Electrons) does not wear, it cannot be split

(c) There is no shortage

(d) It can be of excellent service in widely different conditions—in vacuums, in gases and in solids .

(e) Its insignificant mass has insignificant inertia, which helps in high speed results

(f) Protons, which when combined make for light, are born of electrons

(g) The electric current is a stream of electrons—enormous quantities of moving particles

(h) Each charge has definite sphere of Influence. Forces extend from the charge into space The space around charges no longer remains empty. They are surrounded by a Field—the Field of Action of Forces

(10) Thus, the concept of Visnu, can be summarised to mean that indefinable Astronomical Body, which projected itself into the Cosmos, and perhaps beyond it also, if such a transcendent one is the origin of "word, touch, light, essence and scent" (the 5 Bhūtas) of Hindu Mythology meaning Ākāśa, Vāyu, Teja, Jala and Pṛthvī or the Elements and which ever exists, has its properties entered into every object of earth or space Perhaps, it is akin to the concept of the Electron—of course, much more bulkier and powerful—from which the powerful electric currents and the magnetic Fields of Action flow up This Macro Electron is thus the Astronomical Body that is called Visnu

(11) In śloka 6 7 69 and 6 7 89-90 (9) we find that the Visnu's Image (with four hands, a Sudarśana Cakra etc) has to be forsaken—and only Avyakta is to be worshipped In Hindu mythology, it is again declared that Saguna worship (Idol worship) is merely a convenient form of worship for each and every man. while for Jñyānīs (i e those initiated into This truth

of Religion), Nirguna worship is the only worship This is the culmination of "Reaching the God"—to repeat the words of Swāmī Vivekānanda It also means that the Idol or image of Visnu, as hither to now propounded in the *Granthas,* conveys to us merely the properties of "Sat, Cit, Ānanda" (Ever Truth, Ever Knowledge, Ever calm and Benedictory) of this God and not that the God exists in that shape We worship thus the properties— not the image Thus, Visnu is that indefinable ultimate Astronomic-Superstar—which has its Field of Action in the minutest object It is no more an imagined power, which the ignorants feared—and worshipped, but is the Real, Ever existing Power which you may not worship, yet still you have to acknowledge as Supreme "Reaching Him" just means such acceptance and acknowledgement Its magnanimity does force us to bow down in Real Awe and yet, not in fear, but in respect for its ever creative, all knowing, and ever calm and benedictory power !

Appendix References—

(1) विष्णोः सकाशादुद्भूतं जगत्तत्रैव च स्थितम् ।
स्थितिसंयमकर्तासौ जगतोऽस्य जगच्च सः ॥

(Visnu Purāna I 1 31)

(2) विष्णोः स्वरूपात्परतो हि ते द्वे
रूपे प्रधानं पुरुषश्च विप्र ।
तस्यैव तेऽन्येन धृते वियुक्ते
रूपान्तरं तद्द्विज कालसंज्ञम् ॥

(Visnu Purāna I 2 24)

(3) तैः षड्भिरयनं वर्षं द्वेऽयने दक्षिणोत्तरे ।
अयनं दक्षिणं रात्रिर्देवानामुत्तरं दिनम् ॥
दिव्यैर्वर्षसहस्रैस्तु कृतत्रेतादिसंज्ञितम् ।
चतुर्युग द्वादशभिस्तद्विभागं निबोध मे ॥
चत्वारि त्रीणि द्वे चैकं कृतादिषु यथाक्रमम् ।
दिव्याब्दानां सहस्राणि युगेष्वाहुः पुराविदः ॥
तत्प्रमाणैः शतैः सन्ध्या पूर्वा तत्राभिधीयते ।
सन्ध्यांशश्चैव तत्तुल्यो युगस्यानन्तरो हि सः ॥

(Visnu Purāna I 3 10-13)

(4) चतुर्युगाणां संख्याता साधिका ह्येकसप्ततिः ।
मन्वन्तरं मनोः कालः सुरादीनां च सत्तम ॥
अष्टौ शतसहस्राणि दिव्यया संख्यया स्मृतम् ।
द्विपञ्चाशत्तथान्यानि सहस्राण्यधिकानि तु ॥
त्रिंशत्कोट्यस्तु सम्पूर्णाः संख्याताः संख्यया द्विज ।
सप्तषष्टिस्तथान्यानि नियुतानि महामुने ॥
विंशतिस्तु सहस्राणि कालोऽयमधिकं विना ।
मन्वन्तरस्य सङ्ख्येयं मानुषैर्वत्सरैर्द्विज ॥
चतुर्दशगुणो ह्येष कालो ब्राह्ममहः स्मृतम् ।
ब्राह्मो नैमित्तिको नाम तस्यान्ते प्रतिसञ्चरः ॥
जनस्थैर्योगिभिर्देवैश्चिन्त्यमानोऽब्जसम्भवः ।
तत्प्रमाणां हि तां रात्रिं तदन्ते सृजते पुनः ॥
एवं तु ब्रह्मणो वर्षमेवं वर्षशतं च यत् ।
शत हि तस्य वर्षाणां परमायुर्महात्मनः ॥
एकमस्य व्यतीतं तु परार्द्धं ब्रह्मणोऽनघ ।
तस्यान्तेऽभून्महाकल्पः पाद्म इत्यभिविश्रुतः ॥
द्वितीयस्य परार्द्धस्य वर्तमानस्य वै द्विज ।
वाराह इति कल्पोऽयं प्रथमः परिकीर्तितः ॥

(Visnu Purāna I 3 18—22 25—28)



The Porpoise Constellation or Śiśumāra Cakra and its Significance

—Ramchandra Kumar Sharma

ग्रहर्क्षतारामयमाधिदैविकं पापापहं मन्त्रकृतां त्रिकालम्।
नमस्यतः स्मरतो वा त्रिकालं नश्येत तत्कालजमाशु पापम्॥

(Bhāgavata V 23 9)

In the 15th chapter of Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā, Lord Krsna says—"Like the giant Aśwattha (holy fig tree) everlasting downward and upward its branches bending are fed by the Gunas What its form is, its end and beginning, its very nature can never be known here Therefore a man should contemplate Brahma till he has sharpened the axe of his non-attachment With this axe, he must cut through the firmly-rooted Aśvattha tree Let him take refuge in that Primal Being, from whom all this seeming activity streams forth for ever After conquering the evil of worldly attachment and freed from ignorance, pride and delusion he will live in constant Union with the Ātmā Thus they reach that state which is beyond all change This is my supreme abode Shall the sun lend it any light or the moon, or fire ? No, because it is self-luminous, and he, who attains it, will never be reborn " This state was reached by Dhruva

The relativity theory of Śiśumāra cakra in cosmos is like that of a Porpoise, an animal, curved like serpent coil pattern in outer space of the universe, upside down It is like the 12 zodiac signs—conceived in space These 12 pattern features of zodiac contains stars (Naksatras) location—Aśvinī, Bharanī, Krttikā, Punarvasu, Rohinī etc, in respective zodiac's and in constellation form Accordingly, in the galaxies are rotating on their own axis the planets and Semi planets like Neptune, pluto etc, and asteroids too, all circumambulate in fact round the Dhruva Naksatra or

Pole Star which is the source and origin of cosmic energy and thus causing revolution infinitely In astronomy we know a luminious star called Pole star which sailors throughout the world follow on their path of sea-journey. The planets, stars and other luminary bodies circumambulate round this pole star as a mark of reverence and awe The planets with their suns, moons, satellites of planets and other heavenly bodies with the assistance of Dhruva Loka or Pole star and its radiance is constantly rotating in the universe. In the 9th chapter of Bhagavad Gītā Lord Krsna declares—"This entire universe is pervaded by Me, in that eternal form of mine which is not manifest to the senses. My being sustains the universe and brings them forth creation and back to unmanifestation. This is my divine Yogamāyā O son of Kuntī—Māyā makes all things; what moves and what is unmoving, that is why the world and all planets spin Arjuna, I am the cosmos revealed and its seed that lies hidden " Therefore, this Pole star of Dhruva Loka is the axle around which revolve all the heavenly bodies magnetically.

Because of the Dhruvaloka and magnetic subtle source as a dependence or pillar for all heavenly bodies, the earth or other planets do not disintegrate The whole pattern or system of planetary stars and heavenly bodies that are situatad and rotates on cosmos, is in the form of porpoise Now the description—

On the tail of the Porpoise (शिशुमारचक्रम्) is situated the pole Star or Dhruva Naksatra as it is called On this constellation and middle of the tail of Porpoise Form is Prajāpatī, Agni, Indra and Dharma gods On the root of the tail is Datha and Vidatha On the groin are saptarsis (7 sages) in the form of stars called Great Bear Mandala The 14 asterisms (Naksatras) that belong to Northern Solstice—Uttarāyaṇa are situated on the right side of Porpoise and from Pusya to Uttarāsādha—14 Stars belong to southern solstice or Daksināyana on the left side of it On the buttock portion of the porpoise are Mūla, Pūrvāsādha and uttarāṣādha asterisms and on the belly originates Ākāśa gangā or Milky way On the right and left of the hip are Punarvasu and Pusya On the right and left foot are Ārdrā and Āślesā Naksatras Right and left nostrils are Abhijit and Uttarāsādha. Similarly right and left eyes are Śravana and

and Pūrvāsādha Right and left ears are Dhanisthā and Mūla stars Maghā etc, these eight stars of Daksināyana (course) are on the left ribs and vice versa Mrgaśirā etc, of Uttarāyana asterisms are on the right side Śatabhisā and Jyesthā are on the right and left shoulders On the upper snout is Agastya and lower jaw Yama, mouth-Mars, gender-Saturn, hump-Jupiter, chest-(Sūrya) Sun, heart-Nārāyana, mind-Moon; navel-Venus; breasts-Aśvinī Kumāra Devas; Prāna and Apāna are Mercury, throat-Rāhu, all parts are covered by Ketu and on the small hairs of the Porpoise all stars, planets of different galaxies and heavenly bodies of luminious power.

*This is the ultimate form of Lord Vāsudeva In the form of this celestial (शिशुमारचक्र) is the unity of all stars, planets, galaxies etc., in the entire cosmos or universe

केचनैतज्ज्योतिरनीकं शिशुमारसंस्थानेन भगवतो वासुदेवस्य योगधारणायामनुवर्णयन्ति।

(Bhāgavata V 23 4)

A wise man who considers this astronomical aspect of the said constellation in universe as a manifestation of Lord Vāsudeva is a knowledgable being If a person contemplates as narrated above the (शिशुमारचक्रस्वरूपम्) in the morning, after noon and evening daily—he will be freed from his sins and reach the heaven of righteous and ultimate grace. He will possess Peace, Glory and Goodness Meditation on Lord Vāsudeva is the ultimate path Vāsudeva is Veda, Yoga, Kriyā, Knowledge, Tapas, Dharma and Salvation

वासुदेवपरा वेदा वासुदेवपरा मखाः ।
वासुदेवपरा योगा वासुदेवपराः क्रियाः ॥
वासुदेवपरं ज्ञानं वासुदेवपरं तपः
वासुदेवपरो धर्मो वासुदेवपरा गतिः ॥

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* एतदु हैव भगवतो विष्णो सर्वदेवतामय रूपमहरह सध्याया प्रयतो वाग्यतो निरीक्षमाण उपतिष्ठेन नमो ज्योतिर्लोकाय कालायनायानिमिषा पतये महापुरुषायाभिधीमहीति।

(Bhāgavata V 23 8)

Śrī Madhva's Philosophy

—Dr P. Nagaraja Rao

Śrī Madhva's philosophy is realistic, pluralistic and theistic in its character In the analysis of the philosophical categories He trails forth an unique path He does not classify reality into seven categories as the Nyāya school nor into two as the Sāṅkhya nor reduce all categories to one Brahma as the Advaitins He classifies reality into two categories.

1 Independent Real (svatantra) and

2 Dependent Real (asvatantra)

The dividing criterion, of independence is the attribute within whose confines Śrī Madhva has packed, tons of wisdom, comprehending all things and uniquely elevating Lord Śrī Nārāyana, as the Supreme Para-tattva Independence means, that the Lord does not derive from others, His existence, His knowledge and action (svarūpa, pramiti and pravrtti) The dependent reals, rely on Lord for all these three This classification gives the honoured place, differentiating His status from all, including Laksmī Laksmī is no doubt Nitya Mukta (ever-liberated and not tainted by sorrow) Though she is Vibhu (all pervasive like the Lord) in space and time, in respect of gunas (attributes) She is far removed from His perfection It is the criterion of dependence that enables Madhava, to throw all else on one side, and the Lord on the other The attribute independence is astoundingly comprehensive He is the agent of creation, sustenance, destruction, control, knowledge, bondage, ignorance, and release Independence enables the Lord to make use of the Anādi Karma and the svarūpa of the souls for creation He is not dependent on the instrument They are in His command They cannot function without Him The Lord can do the impossible but He does not do

so Śrī Madhva quotes a verse from the Bhāgavata, testifying to the truth (II 10-12) The dependent Reals are eternal, not in their own right. They are so because the Lord has willed them

The attribute 'Independence' connotes that the Lord can do, undo, and do things otherwise than others, by His powers, Independence makes Him the most important category to be contemplated on by the Dependent Reals, for their liberation It is His Independence that makes Him grant knowledge to the ignorant and moksa to the knowledged and bliss to the liberated (See Anuvyākhyāna I 5 15)

Śrī Madhva relies on scriptures as the supreme authority for establishing the philosophical categories by his system Logic and reasoning are accepted as aidṣ to scripture-revealed truth He eschews the use of logic, as an independent and exclusive means for establishing philosophical truths He conforms closely to the verdict of the Sūtrakāra (Tarkāpratisthānād II 1 11)

If it be said that notwithstanding the weak foundations of reasoning, things can be inferred otherwise, the Sūtrakāra says, 'In that way too there will be inconclusiveness and the result of non-release '

"apyanyathānumeyamiti ced evamapi avimoksaprasangāt"

Śrī Madhva describes inference as karmacārini

Madhva takes entire Veda not only a portion of the Veda, (as others) as authoritative—Vedas including the Brāhamanas the Mantras (the ritual portion) He also takes the Purāna, Itihāsas, Mūla Rāmāyana, Mahābhārata and Pāñcarātra as authoritative He established the supremacy of the chief philosophical category, Lord Nārāyana, as the prime-import of all scriptures The samanvaya, he effects, is marvellously comprehensive and leaves out nothing and does not show any preference to one set of texts over the others. He establishes by his knowledge of the etymology of words that the primary import of all significant words and non-sensible sounds to have for its subject the Lord He affirms the Harivamśa statement (Parva III 323 94)

"Vede Rāmāyane caiva Purāne bhārate tathā, ādāvante ca

madhye ca Visnuḥ sarvatra gīyate." He puts up the case for Brahmasūtra as the great book and calls it parā Vidyā He holds that the canons of the Brahmasūtra determine the meaning of entire scriptures He looks upon Brahmasūtra as the complex of three pramāṇas, Āptamūlatva, śrutimūlatva and yuktimūlatva (Anuvyākhyāna, verses-6) Other Bhāṣyakāras disagree with the sūtrakāra and correct him And yet others regard Vyāsa as a mere sage and downgrade the omniscience of the Lord. It redounds to the credit of Śrī Madhava for according to a unique status privileged position and Āptatamattva to the Brahmasūtra

Śrī Madhva accords a unique status to the epic Mahābhārata He holds the epic as speaking primarly about Lord Visnu's glory. He opines that the epic has three meanings the direct meaning, the secret meaning and the expounding of others views He has an epitome on the work called the Mahābhārata Tātparya Nirṇaya

He loved the Bhāgavata as the great Purāna and has given an epitome of it called the 'Bhāgavata Tātparya Nirnaya' During his life-time he expounded the Purāna to the admiration of scholars. He fixed the standard text He was of opinion that those who read the Vedas and leave out the Purānas are really unlearned The meaning of the vaidika passage is expatiated with the help of the Itihāsas and Purāna, the Vedas themselves look down with disfavour on those who have not read the Purānas There is nothing in Madhva's philosophy to countenance the view held by the modern intellectual highbrow that the Purāna and the epics are mere mythology, marking the infant stage of development

The Brahamasūtras constitute the 'Nirnāyaka Śāstras' and the other scriptures constitute the Nirneya Śāstra, another important feature of Śrī Madhva's philosophy is his concept of Viśeṣa Śrī Madhva holds that the Lord and his attributes are a unity The Śāstras describe the Lord as the home of infinite suspicious attributes In order to indicate and show the different attributes in the unitary substance-Brahma, the concept viśesa is used It does the work of difference by distinguishing the different aspects Which are inseparable from the objects Without the concept of viśesa, which is self-differentiating and are many, we cannot differentiate

the inseparable manifold attributes of the Lord This concept secures the unity and the presence of the manifold distinguishable, and yet inseparable attributes of Lord for us

The concept of difference is the unique relation that obtains between the Lord and the souls Lord and the universe, matter and matter, matter and soul This is the celebrated doctrine of the Pañca Bheda, true at all times Difference is the very nature of the object we cognise It is dharmī svarūpa To cognise an object is to know it as difference from other objects That bheda is dharmī svarūpa (the very nature of the object) is also accepted by the Prabhākara School of Mīmāmsā What distinguishes Madhva's concept of bheda is saviśesa abheda and not bare difference The character of subject does not annul the inseparable attributes that pertain to the object

On the ethical plane Śrī Madhva does not envisage at any stage wherein man can give up his karma i e his duties The contention that the karmas bind us and throw us into the endless cycle of births and deaths is not true of all karmas Karma when performed as sacrifice and dedicated to the Lord, with no desire for worldly fruits not only does not bind us to Samsāra but liberates us Śrī Madhva is opposed to akarma-vāda (do nothingism) and holds that all men must do karma however great and wonderful their powers may be

On the plane of logic Śrī Madhva's conception of the instruments of knowledge and validity represents a radical realist position 'He holds to the correspondence doctrine of truth He accepts three pramānas and subsumes all other pramānas in them He gives a radically realistic conception of errors, establishing pratīti, for absolute non-existence His khyātivāda (theory of error) is called Abhinava Anyathākhyāti Vāda He accepts the apauruseya nature of the Vedas, he harmonizes the bheda and the abheda śrutis in a perfect way Wherever there is an expression of identity, it has to be interpreted as meaning important of oneness of opinion or nearness or gathering together in a single place and as belonging to one Under no circumstance identity means identity of being He does not down-grade one set of śrutis at the cost of other śrutis

Śrī Madhva's conception of sākṣī as the perceiver of the validity of object is unique It is sākṣī that vouchsafes the validity of the three pramāṇas If we do not accept sākṣī, we would end up in infinite regress He has perplexed many a modern by his triadic classification of souls, into the sāttvika, rājasa and tāmasa jīvas These types are the svarūpa of the soul. These are immutable Their destiny is determined by their nature The first attain mokṣa, the second dangle between earth and heaven and hell and the third are damned to eternal perdition The doctrine of *svarūpa yogyatā* helps us to account for the inequalities in human life even at the very first birth the souls take on to work their Sādhanā.

It is no slur on God that he does not change the svarūpa of the soul To change the svarūpa totally is to destroy individuality Change has meaning only against a background of identity. Total change is destruction. There is no limit to the demand, the souls make, to attain higher status They may even demand equal status with the Lord The classification of souls into three divisions may not be an optimistic doctrine, but it is a faithful picture of human nature without white-washing it

Śrī Madhva's exposition of the relation between Brahma and the individual soul is remarkable in many ways The Lord is the prototype (Bimba) and the souls are reflections (Pratibimba) The relation is one of complete dependence Any movement in the bimba is manifested in the reflections The reflection has no independent existence Bimbapratibimbabhāva means tadadhīnatva i e , depencence on Him Reflection needs a medium (Upādhi), in the present instance the medium is not external It is the very nature of the soul (Svarūpa), so it is indestructible The reflection can become impermanent on three counts 1. The destruction of the medium (Upādhi) 2 The destruction of prototype 3 The non-proximity of the prototype and the reflection and upādhi There cannot be destruction for the medium (Upādhi) because it is the very nature of the eternal soul. TheBimba being all pervasive. there can be no severance of the prototype from the reflection Hence the souls are eternal reals and dependent

The implications of the doctrine are that the souls are not merely

insentient objects like prakṛti They should exert themselves to work out the way to reach God Śrī Madhva, affirms Jīva-Kartrtva—agency of the soul but that agency is given by God The fruits of the exercise of the agency belong to the soul, not to God The soul is the enjoyer of the fruits

Śrī Madhva has given us a complete system of philosophy Besides his commentaries on the Gītā, Upaniṣads, Brahmasūtra, Rksamhitā, epitome of Mahābhārata and Bhāgavata, he has set out ten philosophical tracts called prakaranas Each of them deals with one or other aspect of the system, its logic, its ontology, its ethics, Sadācārasmrti Karmanirṇaya (Tattvasaṅkhyāna) the laws of debate, Kathālaksana. as exhaustive criticism of the Advaita system in four prakaranas— Upādhi-Khandana, Māyāvāda-Khandana, Nityatvānumāna Khandana Tattvoddyota.

Śrī Madhva was a great worshipper and has given us an excellent manuel describing the way we should worship the Lord, install idols, in temples, consecration ceremonies and the way to learn and perform a large number of mantras This work is called Tantrasāra Sangraha

His Sadācāra-Smrti gives us in clear details the routine, the religious minded man should adopt during a day

The doctrine of Bhakti and the glory of the Lord are sung by Śrī Madhva in his delightful compilation called Karnāmrtamahārnava and his own compositions Dvādaśa Stotra, set on music and dance

In his Yatipranavakalpa he has laid down the rules for the assumption of Samnyāsāśrama and their function and modes of life Śrī Madhva's philosophy is a self-complete system with nothing like it before or after, the reason being that Lord Himself directly approved his writing and instructed him to spread his name

To avoid Hells, think of Lord Viṣṇu

Parāśara—I will now, great Muni, give you an account of the hells which are situated beneath the earth and beneath the waters, and into which sinners are finally sent

The names of the different Narakas are as follows—

Raurava, Sūkara, Rodha, Tāla, Viśasana, Mahājvāla, Taptakumbha, Lavana, Vimohana, Rudhirāndha, Vaitaranī, Krmiśa, Krimibhojana, Asipatravana, Krsna, Lālābhaksa, Dāruna, Puyavāha, Pāpa, Vahnijvāla, Adhosiras, Sandamsa, Kālasūtra, Tamas, Avīci, Śvabhojana, Apratistha, and another Avīci These and many other fearful hells are the awful provinces of the Kingdom of Yama, terrible with instruments of torture and with fire, into which are hurled all those who are addicted when alive to sinful practices

The man who bears false witness through partiality, or who utters any falsehood, is condemned to the Raurava (dreadful) hell, He who causes abortion, plunders a town, kills a cow, or strangles a man, goes to the Rodha hell (or that of obstruction) The murderer of a Brāhmana, stealer of gold, or drinker of wine, goes to the Sūkara (swine) hell, as does any one who associates with them The murderer of a man of the second or third caste, and one who is guilty of adultery with the wife of his spiritual teacher, is sentenced to the Tāla (padlock) hell and one who holds incestuous intercourse with a sister, or murders an ambassador, to Taptakumbha (or the hell of heated caldrons) The seller of his wife, a gaoler, a horse dealer, and one who deserts his adherents, falls into the Taptaloha (red-hot iron) hell He who commits incest with a daughter-in-law or daughter, is cast into the Mahājvāla hell (or that of great flame), and he who is disrespectful to his spiritual guide, who is abusive to his betters, who reviles the Vedas, or who sells them, who associates with women in a prohibited degree, into the Lavaṇa (salt) hell A thief and a contemner of prescribed observances falls into Vimohana (the place of bewildering) He who hates his father,

the Brāhmanas, and the gods, or who spoils precious gems, is punished in the Krmibhakṣa hell (where worms are his food), and he who practises magic rites for the harm of others, in the hell called Krmiśa (that of insects) The vile wretch who eats his meal before offering food to the gods, to the manes, or to guests, falls into the hell called Lālābhaksa (where saliva is given for food) The maker of arrows is sentenced to the Vedhaka (piercing) hell: and the maker of lances, swords, and other weapons, to the dreadful hell called Viśasana (murderous) He who takes unlawful gifts goes to the Adhomukha (or head inverted) hell; as does one who offers sacrifices to improper objects, and an observer of the stars (for the prediction of events) He who eats by himself sweetmeats mixed with his rice, and a Brāhmana who vends Lac, flesh, liquors, sesamum, or salt, or one who commits violence, falls into the hell (where matter flows, or) Pūyavāha, as do they who rear cats, cocks, goats, dogs, hogs, or birds Public performers, fishermen, the follower of one born in adultery, a poisoner, an informer, one who lives by his wife's prostitution, one who attends to secular affairs on the days of the Parvas (or full and new moon, & c), an incendiary, a treacherous friend, a soothsayer, one who performs religious ceremonies for rustics, and those who sell the acid Asclepias, used in sacrifices, go to the Rudhirāndha hell (whose wells are of blood) He who destroys a bee-hive, or pillages a hamlet, is condemned to the Vaitaranī hell He who causes impotence, trespasses on others' lands, is impure, or who lives by fraud, is punished in the hell called (black, or) Krsna He who wantonly cuts down trees goes to the Asipatravana hell (the leaves of whose trees are swords) and a tender on sheep, and hunter of deer, to the hell termed Vahnijvālā (or fiery flame); as do those who apply fire to unbaked vessels (potters) The violator of a vow, and one who breaks the rules of his order, falls into the Sandamsa (or hell of pincers), and the religious student who sleeps in the day, and is, though unconsciously, defiled, and they who, though mature, are instructed in sacred literature by their children, receive punishment in the hell called Śvabhojana (where they feed upon dogs) These hells, and hundreds and thousands of others,

are the places in which sinners pay the penalty of their crimes As numerous as are the offences that men commit, so many are the hells in which they are punished and all who deviate from the duties imposed upon them by their caste and condition, whether in thought, word, or deed, are sentenced to punishment in the regions of the damned

The gods in heaven are beheld by the inhabitants of hell, as they move with their heads inverted, whilst the gods as they cast their eyes downwards, behold the sufferings of those in hell The various stages of existence, Maitreya, are inanimate things, fish, birds animals, men, holy men, gods, and liberated spirits, each in succession a thousand degrees superior to that which precedes it, and through these stages the beings that are either in heaven or in hell are destined to proceed, until final emancipation be obtained That sinner goes to Naraka who neglects the due expiation of his guilt

For, Maiterya, suitable acts of expiation have been enjoined by the great sages for every kind of crime Arduous penances for great sins, trifling ones for minor offences, have been propounded by Svāyambhuva and others but reliance upon Krsna is far better than any such expiatory acts, as religious austerity, or the like Let any one who repents of the sin of which he may have been culpable have recourse to this best of all expiations, remembrance of Hari by addressing his thoughts to Nārāyana at dawn, at night, at sunset, and midday, a man shall be quickly cleansed from all guilt the whole heap of worldly sorrows is dispersed by meditating on Hari, and his worshipper, looking upon heavenly fruition as an impediment to felicity, obtains final emancipation He whose mind is devoted to Hari in silent prayer, burnt-offering, or adoration, is impatient even of the glory of the king of the gods Of what avail is ascent to the summit of heaven, if it is necessary to return from thence to earth ? How different is the meditation on Vāsudeva, which is the seed of eternal freedom ! Hence, Muni, the man who thinks of Visnu, day and night, goes not to Naraka after death, for all his sins are atoned for

—*Visnu Purāna*

Tulasī-leaf—very dear to Lord Viṣṇu

Of all leaves and flowers the auspicious Tulasī, which grants (i e satisfies) all desires, which belongs to and is very much liked by Visnu, is the best Tulasī gives enjoyments and liberation, is the chief, the greatest in all worlds and auspicious, resorting to which the best sages have eternally gone to heaven She (i e the Tulasī plant) was formerly planted by Visnu for the good of all the worlds The leaf and flower of Tulasī are valued in all good works As Laksmī is dear to Visnu or as I am dear (to him), in the same way this goddess Tulasī is (dear to him), a fourth one is not to be obtained One Tulasī leaf gives a hundred (coins of) gold Without Tulasī leaves, Visnu, the demon-killer, is not pleased He is not pleased with other flowers and leaves and applications of sandal etc He, who, with the hope of final beatitude, has worshipped Hari with this (i e a Tulasī leaf), has indeed given (gifts), offered oblations, obtained knowledge and performed sacrifices or observed vows etc I think that by Visnu's worship with Tulasī leaf brightness, happiness, fame, wealth, (noble) family, (good) character, (good) wife, (good) son, (good) daughter, wealth, kingdom, health, knowledge and special knowledge, Vedas Vedāngas, science, Purānas, sacred texts, are in his hand birth after birth

As Gangā of a charming form grants liberation in heaven or as Bhāgīrathī is auspicious, so is auspicious Tulasī What is the use of the water of Gangā and what is the use of resorting to Puskara ? He gets delighted with water mixed with Tulasī leaf only That intelligent man, to whom Visnu is favourable in every birth, has faith in worshipping Visnu with Tulasī (leaves) O Skanda, it is not possible to narrate the fruit of merit of him who would worship Visnu with the sprouts and leaves of Tulasī There is the proximity of Visnu, where there is Tulasī grove. Brahmā also (lives) there,

and also Laksmī with all the hosts of gods Therefore a man should always worship that deity (which is) in proximity All those panegyrics and hymns etc.,become eternal (when recited in the proximity of Tulasī) All the evil spirits, goblins, ghosts of brāhmanas, ghosts, demons etc , always run away (from) there

The mothers like Alaksmī, Nāśanī, Ghūrnā; Dākinī, get frightened after seeing the Tulasī leaf There (and then) only all sins like the murder of a brāhmana, sinful diseases due to sins, committed through bad advice, perish He, who has planted a grove of Tulasī for Viṣṇu on the earth, has duly performed a hundred sacrifices in which daksinā (fee paid to brāhmaṇas) is dear By putting Tulasī on Viṣṇu-idols, and also on Śālagrāma stones, one would be absorbed with Viṣṇu The men (i.e relatives) of the wise man who would plant a Tulasī plant for Viṣṇu on the earth, are happy; he goes to Viṣṇu's abode He who after having worshipped Visnu, puts the remaining of the Tulasī leaf on his own head, is purified and would go to heaven.

In the Kaliyuga Tulasī burns one's sin, and gives one (i e takes one to) heaven and salvation on (i.e by) worshipping it, narrating (its account), meditating upon it, planting it and putting its (leaves etc) (on one's person). He who teaches about it, and himself practises it, goes to the highest place, viz , Visnu's abode That which pleases Visnu is dearer to me O Skanda, the leaf of Tulasī is equal to all gods and goddesses in śrāddhas and sacrifices Therefore serve Tulasī with all effort He, who has served Tulasī, has served everyone like his preceptor, a brāhmana or a sacred place.

Therefore, O Skanda, serve (the Tulasī) He who would cast his life while keeping Tulasī on the tuft of hair on his head, is free from a stream of sins and goes to the happy heaven That (high) position which the wise obtain by means of sacrifices like Rājasūya, vows and various restraints is obtained by those who serve Tulasī A man obtains the position of Visnu by worshipping Visnu just with one leaf, what is the use of (giving) the minute details of the sacred precepts ? He, who has worshipped Viṣṇu with a crore of soft Tulasī leaves, would not drink the milk of his mother (i e would not suck his mother's breasts, i e would not be born)

A man should enliven thousands of men, by worshipping Viṣṇu everyday with delicate Tulasī leaves. O child, I have told you the main qualities of Tulasī

I am unable to describe all the qualities even with (i e even after spending) a long time He who would daily listen to this account—the collection of religious merit, is free from the sin committed in the previous birth, and from the bondage of birth One would get the fruit of agniṣṭoma by reciting it even once. Such a man does not contract diseases, nor does he have ignorance, O son He always gets success, he is never defeated The wealth of him, in whose house there is a writing (i e. the written account), thrives. Mental agonies, evil spirits, griefs, or insult do not remain, even for a moment, at that place where there is such a written account

—*Padma Purāna*



Glory of Gaṅgā

The offences of any man who bathes in this river are immediately expiated, and unprecedented virtue is engendered Its waters, offered by sons to their ancestors in faith for three years, yield to the latter rarely attainable gratification Men of twice-born orders, who offer sacrifice in this river to the lord of sacrifice, Purusottama, obtain whatever they desire, either here or in heaven Saints who are purified from all soil by bathing in its waters, and whose minds are intent on Keśava, acquire thereby final liberation This sacred stream, heard of, desired, seen, touched, bathed in, or hymned, day by day, sanctifies all beings, and those who even at a distance of a hundred leagues, exclaim "Gangā, Gangā," atone all the sins committed during three previous lives The place whence this river proceeds, for the purification of the three worlds, is the third division of the celestial regions, the seat of Visnu

—*Visnu Purāna*



Greatness of God Viṣṇu

देव—
१. दनुज-वन-दहन, गुन-गहन, गोविंद नंदादि-आनंद-दाताऽबिनाशी।
२. अनंत, भगवंत-जगदंत-अंतक-त्रास-शमन, श्रीरमन, भुवनाभिराम।
३. वामनाव्यक्त, पावन, परावर, विभो, प्रकट, परमातमा, प्रकृतिस्वामी।
४. नीलजलदाभ तनु श्याम, बहु काम छबि राम राजीवलोचन कृपाला।
५. वसन किंजल्कधर, चक्र-सारंग-दर-कंज-कौमोदकी अति विशाला।
६. कृष्ण, करुणाभवन, दवन कालीय खल विपुल कंसादि निर्वंशकारी।
७. ब्रह्म, व्यापक, अकल, सकल, पर परमहित, ग्यान, गोतीत, गुणवृत्तिहर्त्ता।
८. भक्तिप्रिय, भक्तजन-कामधुक धेनु, हरि, हरण दुर्घट बिकट विपति भारी।

(Vinaya Patrikā 49)

O Lord Visnu !
You set fire to the forest of demons
You are the mine of noble virtues
You are the controller of the senses
You delighted Nanda and many others.
You are imperishable, by all means

O Lord Visnu !
You are glorious and boundless
Yama is out to destroy the universe
You deliver us from Yama's clutches
You are Laksmī's Master and Spouse
You shower bliss upon the Cosmos

O Lord Visnu !
You had assumed Vāmana's incarnation
You transcend our sense perception
You are pure beyond imagination
Along with animate and inanimate field
You administer this and the next world
Indeed, You are Nature's Supreme Lord



Visnu the Deliverer

O Lord Visnu !
You are as blue-bodied as a cloud
You've the charm of many a cupid
Your eyes are as lovely as the lotus
You spread through the entire Cosmos
You are the repository of kindness.

O Lord Visnu !
The saffron colour of Your robes
Accords with the pollens of the lotus
You have a lotus, a conch, a discus,
The 'Sāranga' bow and a big mace

O Lord Visnu !
You have charisma of your own
You are the abode of compassion
You are credited with Kāliya's ruin
You killed Kamśa and many a demon

O Lord Visnu !
You are formless yet omnipresent
You are the Supreme Spirit manifest
You are our well-wisher, no doubt
You curb our leanings to vices
You are Wisdom incarnate, of course

O Lord Visnu !
You value nothing but devotion
Devotees alone win Your affection
Like Kāmadhenu You bless them anon.
You save them from many a calamity,
That is why You are called Hari

—Translated by R S Sengar



Brahma-Yoga, the Way to Viṣṇu, the Blessed State beyond Suffering

—Yogacharya Kiran Shankar

1. Threefold Suffering—

Viṣṇu-Purāṇa (V.P.) enumerates the threefold suffering **(Tāpa trayam)** in human life. **Ādhidaivika** suffering refers to the natural disasters caused by severe cold, storm, scorching heat, intense precipitation, floods, lightnings etc. Pains and injuries caused by germs, insects, animals, birds and human beings as well are known as **Ādhibhautika** suffering. Both types of such sufferings can be categorized as environmental factors that disturb the human beings.

One of the **Ādhi-bhautika** or mundane factors causing pains is the human beings themselves. Because of various human activities consisting of energy production and consumption, industries, agriculture and deforestation, concentrations of greenhouse gases like carbon-dioxide, methane, tropospheric ozone, chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), nitrous oxide etc. have increased at significant rates within the last century. Greenhouse effects of these chemical pollutants in the atmosphere have caused the increase in global warming. The global mean temperature rise to date has been estimated to range from 0.3°c to 0.6°c during the last 100 years. If no steps are taken at the international level to limit the greenhouse gas emissions, the average rate of increase of global mean temperature during the next century would be about 0.3°c per decade. Due to such climate change caused by the effects of global warming, man has to suffer further. Thus, it seems that **Ādhibhautika** problems generated by human beings become the cause of **Ādhi-daivika** or natural hazards.

Because of increase in tropospheric ozone, man may suffer from headache, cough, eye disorders, upper respiratory problems etc.,

and even the crop production may be reduced Synthetic gases like chloro-fluorocarbons have caused reduction in stratospheric ozone which limits the radiation of ultra-violet rays of the Sun from reaching the surface of the Earth These ultraviolet rays of the Sun cause skin cancer, eye problems, reduction in immunity power in human beings and adversely affect the productivity of aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems One percent reduction in ozone in stratosphere may increase the probability of skin cancer by 3%

Apart from the sufferings caused by the two types of environmental factors, **Ādhibhautika** and **Ādhidaivika,** as mentioned above, the third type of disturbance consists of bodily diseases such as headache, cold, influenza, fever, abdominal diseases, respiratory problems, eye disorders etc and mental abnormalities such as lust, anger, fear, dislike, greed, delusion, enviousness, sorrow etc. Such types of suffering, both physical and mental, are known as **Ādhyātmika Tāpa,** psycho-somatic suffering (V.P :6.5.2-6). It is also, by now, clear that this type of suffering can also be generated artificially by other environmental factors as mentioned before

Thus, man suffers in threefold way But the important question is—

"Does man like to suffer ?"

No one in the normal state of mind would like to suffer Suffering is like a coin having two sides of pain and pleasure Temporary pleasure is just the other form of pain During winter, a man needs heat, and a heater gives him the pleasure, pain being the experience of cold On the other hand, during summer, he needs coolness; and the heater which was the cause of pleasure during winter now becomes the cause of pain during summer Hence **Viṣṇu-Purāṇa** (2 6 46-49) states that the same object is the cause of both pain and pleasure, anger and cheerfulness. That which imparts pleasure to mind is heaven **(Svarga),** and that which troubles the mind is hell **(Naraka).** Hence, in the words of **Maharṣi Parāśara—**

"tasmād duhkhātmakam nāsti na ca kiñcit sukhātmakam,
manasah parināmo'yam sukha-duhkhādi-laksanah "

(V P 2 6 49)

i e., there is nothing which is painful or pleasure-some; and hence, pain and pleasure are just the resultants of the mind only. If one knows these psycho-somatic noumena and phenomena, one really understands the cause of suffering as well. What is this cause that leads one to suffering ?

2. Non-Knowledge, the cause of Sufferings—

Evidently, it is **Ajñāna,** the non-knowledge or ignorance, which is the main cause of one's suffering. In the darkness of ignorance, man lacks the power of inner realization Hence, he is always devoted to sensuality in search of happiness, but finally suffers due to the lack of proper knowledge (V P 6.5 21,24) Ignorance is like the darkness which actually does not exist at all, because it immediately disappears as the light appears

This **Ajñāna** or **Avidyā** is the darkness of delusion which affects the human mind in two ways Firstly, one confuses one's body **(deha)** with the supreme Self **(Ātmā).** Secondly, one becomes attached to the changing phenomena Thus, the man is trapped into suffering due to **Moha,** delusion This trapping into suffering is known as **Bandhana,** attachment or bondage Man keeps on running after the ephemeral sensual pleasures so much so that he accumulates in him the dusts of **vāsanā,** the mundane desires never fulfilled, and gets into a state of tiredness due to delusion **(Moha-śrama).** Indeed attachment is the cause of innumerable sufferings (**Saṅgādaśeṣāḥ prabhavanti doṣāḥ.** V P 4 2 124)

No one would like to have disease If there be a disease, there is a cause to it Is there a state beyond disease ? Yes, it is health ! No one would like to suffer If there be suffering, there is a cause to it It is called ignorance, delusion, attachment etc Is there a state beyond suffering ? If there be such a state, everyone would like to enjoy it !

3. Viṣṇu, The blessed state beyond Suffering—

Man is a trinity of will to exist, will to know and will to enjoy Thus, will to exist infinitely, to know perfectly, and to enjoy permanently is present everywhere The supreme state of eternal existence is known as **Sat** Perfect consciousness is called **Cit.** Experience of supreme joy is known as **Ānandam.** the blessed

state of **Sat-cit-Ānandam,** the supreme existence, consciousness and bliss, is known as **Brahma** which is omnipresent

That which exists everywhere and permeates each and every particle of the infinite universe is also known as **Vāsudeva** or **Param Ātmā** (V P 1.2.12,2 15 35) It is supreme **Brahma** known as **Viṣṇu** (**Sa ca Viṣṇuḥ paraṁ Brahma.**—V P 2 7 40), the blessed state which is permanent, beginningless and imperishable

Viṣṇu is the supreme state of bliss beyond suffering Since, the cause of suffering is **Ajñāna,** the lack of knowledge, and as soon as the light of knowledge appears, the darkness of ignorance, attachment and delusion disappears, **Brahma** or **Viṣṇu** is also referred to as **Jñāna,** the supreme knowledge or supreme consciousness The whole universe is permeated with this supreme light of spontaneous knowledge There is nothing higher than **Jñāna** (V P 2 6 50)

Viṣṇu also represents the trinity of birth, life and transformation, creation, continuation and absorption (re-creation) According to **Viṣṇu-Purāṇa** (6 5 73—80),— Visnu is called **Bhagavat** or **Bhagavān** as well In this word, "**Bha**" represents the aspect of maintenance and the basis of the whole existence "**Ga**" represnts that aspect in nature, which automatically manifests the fruits of action It also refers to the aspects of alpha and omega, birth and death Death is the state of transformation from one to another "**Va**" means that which exists in all and in which all have their existence Thus, **Bha-ga-vā-n** or **Bha-ga-va-t** refers to **Viṣṇu,** the supreme **Brahma** or universal consciousness

Bhaga is also the collective name of the following sixfold opulence—

(1) **Aiśvarya** : the supreme wealth or opulence,
(2) **Dharma** : the supreme power of righteousness,
(3) **Yaśa** : the supreme fame,
(4) **Śrī** : the supreme beauty,
(5) **Jñāna** : the supreme knowledge or wisdom and
(6) **Vairāgya** : the supreme non-attachment

H refers to that supreme
every be one with eternally

Viṣṇuh" i e. **Bhagavān Viṣṇu** is addressed as **Aum** (or **Om**), the supreme sound, which represents the truth of the three-in-one This universal consciousness known as **Parmātmā** is the basis of the whole existence Just as the Sun as the centre controls the whole solar system along with its planets, similarly, **Viṣṇu** or **Paramātmā**; the Cosmic Consciousness, is **Parama-Īśvara**, the supreme controller of the whole cosmos

Thus **Viṣṇu** represents the supreme state of eternal existence, perfect consciousness and infinite bliss The root **"Viṣ"** stands for all pervasiveness and along with the suffix **"nuk"** becomes **'Viṣṇu"** which represents that which is present everywhere **Viṣṇu** stands for **Param Nirvāṇam** experienced by **Svastha-antaḥkaraṇa**, the healthy mind as the supreme state of eternal bliss and consciousness beyond suffering But is there a way to reach to such a state beyond suffering ? Yes, there must be, just as a medicine exists and should be taken for the purposes of attaining the perfect condition of health by removing the cause of disease !

4. Brahma-Yoga, the way to Nirvāṇam

4. 1 Two-fold Karma or Action—

The way to **Nirvāṇam** or **Mokṣa** or **Mukti**, the state of release from suffering, has been declared by **Viṣṇu-Purāṇa** (6 4.41) to be two-fold

> *"parvṛttaṁ ca nivṛttaṁ ca dvividhaṁ karma vaidikam,*
> *tābhyāmubhābhyāṁ purusais sarvamūrttis sa ijyate "*

It means that **Pravṛtti-mārga** or **Karma Yoga**, the path of action and Nivṛtti-mārga, Sānkhya-Yoga or Jñāna Yoga, the path of knowledge, have been divinely revealed as the two-fold action **(dvividha karma)** or spiritual practice to attain the universal consciousness within. **Yogīs** on the path of **Nivṛtti** meditate on **Bhagavān Viṣṇu** who bestows the boon of release from suffering **(Nivṛtte Yogibhir mārge Viṣṇur-mukti-phala-pradaḥ**— (V.P 6 4 43).

The great sage **Parāśara** emphasizes the fact that the only effective medicine **(Bheṣajam)** to free oneself from the threefold suffering is the self-realization or divine realization known as **Bhagavad-Prāpti** which leads one to the supreme bliss **(Nirastātiśayāhlāda-**

sukha-bhāvaik lakṣaṇā —V P ·6 5.59) to attain which the only two-fold methodology (**dvividha karma**) consists of **Jñāna** and **Karma,** knowledge and action (**Tat prāpti hetur-Jñānam ca Karma coktam mahāmune.**—V P 6.5 60)

In Īśopanisad, it is stated—

"vidyāṁ cāvidyāñca yas tad vedobhayam saha,
avidyayā mrtyum tīrtvā vidyayā 'mrtamaśnute "

i e , a spiritual practitioner well-versed in both **Vidyā** or knowledge and **Avidyā** or action goes beyond death by following the path of action (**Avidyā**) and attains immortality or divine bliss by following the path of wisdom (**Vidyā**). Here, **Vidyā** reperesents **Jñāna** or **Nivṛtti-mārga,** the path of knowledge; and **Avidyā** stands for **Karma** or **Pravṛtti-Mārga,** the path of action Thus, action and knowledge are like the two wheels of the chariot of life, without which the chariot cannot proceed forward to reach to the final goal of life

4. 2 Two-fold Jnāna or Knowledge—

On the path of **Nivṛtti** or **Jñāna Yoga, Jñāna** is also of two aspects, scriptural or scholarly knowledge and supreme knowledge attained through self-realization After one becomes well-versed in **Śabda Brahma** (**Śabda Brahmaṇi niṣṇātaḥ**), the knowledge of the supreme truth attained through the study of the scriptures (**Śabda Brahmāgama-mayam**), the spiritual aspirant attains **Para Brahma,** the supreme truth itself (**Param Brahmādhigac-chati.**—V P 6 5 64) through certain spiritual practice of **Viveka,** the power or faculty of human mind to be able to separate between what is right and what is wrong, to discriminate between what is proper and what is improper, to know what is true and what is untrue (**Paraṁ Brahma Vivekajam.**—V.P 6 5 61)

As stated before, the main factor that keeps one away from the supreme light of knowedge is **Ajñāna** or ignorance, the principal cause of suffering In order to destroy the darkness of ignorance, the scriptural knowledge acts as a lamp (or candle light, **Dīpa-vat**), and spontaneous knowledge through **Viveka,** the light from the supra-rational mind, is like the Sun

4. 3 Introduction to Yoga—

Khāṇḍikya who was well-versed in **Karma-mārga,** the path of action, requests **Keśidhvaja,** a great expert in the path of knowledge (**Ātma-vidyā viśāradaḥ**—V P 6 6.9) to guide him along the spiritual path for inner awakenment —

"tat kleśa-praśamāyālam yat karma tadudīraya"

—(V P 6 6 50)

i e., "Please teach me that **Karma** or action by practising which one can get release from **Kleśa** or suffering."

Keśidhvaja who, well-versed in **YOGA** and spiritual knowledge, had been practising to go beyond death by following the path of **Avidyā** or action, replies that when a man relaxes from the tiredness caused by delusion, he becomes mentally healthy and attains the supreme state of release from suffering (**Moha-śrame śamaṁ yāte,...,Paraṁ nirvāṇamṛcchati.**—V.P . 6 7 21)

Supreme Self within is of the formless form of **Nirvāṇa** (**Nirvāṇa-maya Evāyamātmā**), the state of blessedness To experience such a supreme state, in the words of **Keśidhvaja,** there is no way other than **Yoga** which removes sufferings (**Kleśānāṁ ca kṣaya-karṁ yogādanyanna vidyate.**—V P 6 7 25)

Yogic practice makes the mind receptive for the divine light within It is the mind only which is the main cause of both bondage and freedom Bondage is the result of attachment Non-attachment results in the supreme release from suffering Through the **Yogic** practice, one cultivates the faculty of non-attachment When the mind is ready for **Yoga**, and when through practice it finally merges with **Brahma,** the supreme consciousness, this mergence is called **Yoga** (**Tasyā Brahmaṇi saṁyogo Yoga ityabhidhīyate.**—V P 6 7 31) When a man is ready for **Yoga,** he is known as **Mumukṣu Yogī** i e the aspirant **Yogī.** When this aspirant starts actual **Yogic** practice, he is known as **Yoga-Yukta Yogī,** the one who is equipped with **Yogic** technology And when finally he attains **Para Brahma,** the Supreme Beatitude, he is known as **Viniṣpanna Yogī,** the one who has realized the truth within and experienced the inner bliss (V P 6 7 32-33)

4. 4- Mukti-Prada Yoga, the Way to Freedom—

Khāṇḍikya who was ready to receive the inner knowledge of the supreme truth was initiated by **Keśidhvaja** into the eight-fold path of **YOGA** which, according to **Maharṣi Patañjali,** can be broadly classified into two categories—

(1) **Bahiraṅga Yoga** : External **Yogic** practice or Psycho-physical practice and

(2) **Antaraṅga Yoga** : Inner **Yogic** practice or psycho-supra-mental practice.

4. 4. 1- Psycho-physical Yogic Practice—

The first part of **Yoga** is known as **YAMA** to be practised in thought, word and deed, and consists of—

(1) **Brahmacarya** : Practice of continence,
(2) **Ahiṁsā** : Practice of non-injury,
(3) **Satya** : Practice of truthfulness,
(4) **Asteya** : Practice of non-stealing, and
(5) **Aparigraha** : Practice of non-possessiveness

Brahma or **Viṣṇu** is the supreme truth which is the goal of mankind **"Brahmaṇi carati iti Brahamacārī"**, i e , **Brahmacarya** refers to the practice of continuously reflecting upon **Brahma,** the super-consciousness present in each and every particle of the cosmos This is possible only when the mind is steady Sensuality disturbs the mind and makes it restless Hence **Brahmacarya** also refers to the practice of continence and non-adultery The mind which remains undisturbed in any adverse circumstances as well, is always able to maintain the contact with **Brahma,** the supreme light within

Cosmic Consciousness is omnipresent Hence, to injure others would imply injuring oneself **Mahābhārata** states—

"Ātmanaḥ pratikūlāni pareṣāṁ na samācaret."

It means "Do not do unto others as you do not want others to do unto you " Hence those who are practising **Brahmacarya** to realize **Brahma,** the Cosmic Self present everywhere, can never commit injury to others at all Therefore, the practice of **Ahiṁsā** has been highlighted It is harmlessness or love to all living beings It is compassion and selfless service to humanity The literatures on

Tantra declare—

"hımsām tu dūsayatyeva sa vaı hınduh ıtı smrtah"

ı e , any human beıng who deprecates **Hiṁsā**, ınjury, vıolence or destructıve element ıtself ın the human mınd ıs known as the **Hindu.** Thus, the term **"Hindu"** ıtself represents the one who ıs greatly devoted to **Ahıṁsā,** love or compassıon

Accordıng to **Mahābhārata, "Ahıṁsā Parmaṁ Satyaṁ tato dharmaḥ pravartate",** ı e , **Ahimsā** or love ıs **Parama Satya,** the supreme truth through whıch **Dharma,** the human vırtue of rıghteousness becomes expressed **Viṣṇu-Purāṇa** (3 12 43-44) states clearly ın regard to love and truth thus—

"tasmāt satyam vadet prājño yat para-prīti kāranam,
satyam yat para duhkhāya tadā maunaparo bhavet
prıyam-uktam hıtam naıtadıtı mattvā na tad vadet,
śreyas tatra **hitaṁ** *vācyam yadyapyatyantamaprıyam "*

These verses state that the wıse ones should speak the truth whıch makes others cheerful, but should remaın sılent ın cases where the truth may be the source of sufferıng to others These verses further clarıfy that sweet words whıch may not be benefıcıal to others should not be spoken In such cases, ıt ıs better to express benefıcıal words whıch may not be sweet to hear

To take thıngs not gıven by others ıs the act of stealıng Avoıdance of thıs ıs **Asteya.** Mısappropriatıon of all kınds should also be avoıded All kınds of exploıtatıon, brıbery, deceptıon etc also make one's mınd restless, and hence, should be avoıded ıf one ıs to contemplate on reachıng the only ultımate goal of humanıty whıch ıs realızatıon of the dıvınıty wıthın by raısıng oneself from the status of anımalıty

Stealıng or thınkıng of stealıng others' property ıs the result of greedıness Hence **Aparigraha,** non-greedıness, non- possessıveness or non-covetousness ıs essentıal feature of leadıng **Yogic** lıfe Accordıng to thıs, hoardıng anythıng more than what ıs requıred as the bare necessıty ın lıfe leads one to unsteadıness of mınd, and thus to non-Yogıc, dısturbed or unharmonızed lıfe Non-attach-

ment is the key word to be successful in the practice of **Aparigraha.**

The second part of **Yoga** is termed **Niyama** which, according to **Viṣṇu-Purāṇa,** is as follows—

(1) **Svādhyāya** : Practice of self-study,
(2) **Śauca** : Practice of purifying oneself,
(3) **Santoṣa** : Practice of keeping one's mind relaxed and cheerful,
(4) **Tapa** : Practice of elevating oneself higher, and
(5) **Brahma-bhāva:** : Awareness of the Supreme

Svādhyāya consists of reflection on **Sva** or the Self, and is assisted by the study of the scriptures and other literatures which elevate the mind as well as by **Sat-Saṅga** where under the auric influences of the **Yogīs** and the sages, one is always inspired to attain the supreme status of enlightenment

The state of enlightenment cannot be achieved until one practises what, in **Tantra-Yoga,** is known as **Deha-śuddhi** or bodily purification and **Citta-śuddhi** or mental purification Both types of purification are known as **Śauca** or psycho-somatic cleanliness

When psycho-somatic balance is achieved, naturally one is always in peaceful state of mind, always relaxed and joyful Such a relaxed state of mind is technically known as **Santoṣa**

When a man is in the relaxed state of mind, he can always easily continue his **Yogic** practices to elevate himself to the supreme height of spiritual upliftment There may be several hardships, hindrances or disturbances on the path of **Yoga Sādhanā** or **Yogic** practice If the **Yogic** practitioner can cheerfully face such adversities and can go ahead by maintaining the mental harmony, such a **Yogic** practice is known as **Tapa.**

Through such a **Yogic** practice of **Tapa,** one is always aware of cosmic consciousness Such awareness of the supreme is the fifth element of **Niyama,** known as **Īśvara-Praṇidhāna** in **Patañjali's Yoga-Sūtram.**

Practice of **Yama** and **Niyama** without any attachment leads one to **Vimukti,** the state of freedom from suffering (**Niṣkāmāṇāṁ Vimuktidāḥ**)—V P 6 7 38) Thus, equipped with **Yama** and **Niyama,** one should sit in any one of the meditative poses such as **Bhadra-**

Āsana and practise **Yoga. Āsana** practice is the third part of **Yoga**. Body should be straight and steady, and maintained easily and comfortably

Practice of **Āsana** makes one's breath slow and deep Thus, one becomes prepared for the practice of **Prāṇāyāma** or the regulation of breath, the fourth **Yogic** practice Steady bodily posture is the most important pre-requisite for the practice of **Prāṇāyāma**.

When one's breath becomes slow, regular and rhythmatic, the fifth **Yogic** practice known as **Pratyāhāra** becomes natural This is the practice of introspection to withdraw the senses from the external world Then only one is able to establish one's mind in Śubha-Āśraya (V P 6 7 45) which will completely dispel the darkness of ignorance from the mind

4. 4. 2- Psycho-Supramental Yogic Practice—

Brahma, the Supreme Consciousness, is the **Śubha-Āśraya**, the Supreme Shelter of the mind Because of ignorance, cosmic consciousness (**Brahma**) and the cosmos (**Viśva**) appear different When the veil of ignorance is removed, one directly experiences the Supreme Bliss known as **Brahma-Jñāna (Ātmasaṁvedyaṁ taj-jñānaṁ Brahma-saṁjñitam.**—V P 6 7 53) This is the supreme formless form of **Viṣṇu**, the Cosmic Consciousness (Tacca Visnoh param rūpam-arūpākhyamanuttamam V P 6 7 54)

In the beginning, one is not able to concentrate or meditate on the formless Therefore, as the sixth part of **Yoga**, one should heed to the following advice of **Viṣṇu-Purāṇa** (6 7 55)—

"tatah sthūlam hare rūpam
cintayed viśva-gocaram"

This verse advises the **Yogic** practitioners to concentrate on **Viśva**, the universe, the gross form of **Viṣṇu**, the formless, with a view to achieving the state of self-purification (**Ātma- viśudhyartham.**—V P 6 7 73) Where is **Viṣṇu** ? How is this self-purification achieved ?

Since, the whole universe is the expression of **Viṣṇu** or **Brahma**, the Cosmic Consciousness, it is but natural that the abode of this supreme truth is also situated in everyone's **Citta (Citta-sthito Viṣṇuḥ.**—V P 6 7 74), the inner sanctuary of the human mind

The fire of knowledge during concentration burns up all the dirts hidden in the mind of the **Yogīs**. Therefore it has been stated in **Viṣṇu-Purāṇa** (6 7 78) thus—

"mūrttaṁ bhagavato rūpam sarvāpāśraya niḥspṛham,
eṣā vai dhāranā proktā yaccittam tatra dhāryate "

It means that the divine form makes the mind one-pointed, focussing of the mind in such a form being known as **Dhāranā** or concentration **Viṣṇu-Purāṇa** gives the details of various stages of concentration

When one's ability of concentration becomes mature (**Dṛḍhībhūtā**), one is always aware of the object of concentration during any other mundane activity Such awareness, so to say, spiritualizes every other activity of the **Yogīs.**

The formless form of **Brahma,** the supreme consciousness, is known as **Viṣṇu** also called by the realized ones as **Sat,** the eternal existence, upon which the **Yogīs** meditate (V P 6 7 69) The continuous flow of concentration on or awareness of the divine without any attachment whatsoever is known as **Dhyāna** or meditation This is the seventh part of **Yoga**

4. 4. 3. State of Freedom—

Through the **Yogic** practice of **Yama, Niyama, Āsana, Prāṇāyāma, Pratyāhāra, Dhāraṇā** and **Dhyāna,** one finally attains the last part of **Yoga** known as **Samādhi. Samādhi** is the stateless state of Supreme Consciousness In regard to this state, **Viṣṇu-Purāṇa** (6 7 92) states—

"tasyaiva kalpanā hīnam svarūpa-grahanam hi yat,
manasā dhyāna-niṣpādyam samādhih so' bhidhīyate "

According to this statement, man generally imagines a difference between the subject, the object of meditation and meditation itself under the veiling power of ignorance; and when such imagination disappears during meditation, the Supreme Self is realized, this state of self-realization being known as **Samādhi.** In the words of **Keśidhvaja** (V P 6 7 96)—

"vibhedajanake' jñāne nāśamātyantikam gate,
ātmano brahmano bhedam-asantam kaḥ kariṣyati ?"

i e , when ignorance, the cause of creating difference, (and hence, the cause of suffering) is completely destroyed, who can then think of the non-existent difference between **Ātmā** and **Brahma**, the individual cosnciousness and universal consciousness ?

On realization of such a supreme state of unity (**Yoga** or **Samādhi**) between the individual consciousness (**Ātmā**) and cosmic consciousness (**Paramātmā**), **Prahlāda** expresses blissfully (V P 1 1.85-86) thus—

"sarvagatvād-anantasya sa evāham-avasthitah;
mattah sarvam-aham sarvam mayi sarvam sanātane
aham-evāksayo nityah parmātmātma-samśrayah;
brahma-sañjño' hamevāgre tathānte ca parah pumān "

i e., "Because of omnipresence of **Bhagavān Viṣṇu**, He is present in the form of My-Self Therefore, this whole universe has been verily expressed from Me, I am the whole; and I am the eternity in which the whole universe has its existence I am verily the imperishable, the eternal, and the universal consciousness, the supreme shelter of the individual consciousness. I am verily **Brahma**, the Supreme consciousness, the Eternal Existence."

Thus, **Samādhi**, the supreme state of **Yoga**, is the state of freedom from suffering **Khāṇḍikya** calls it **Vimukti-prada Yoga**, the Path (**Yoga**) of Freedom It is **Brahma-Yoga**, the Path to the Supreme Truth, as taught by **Keśidhvaja** and reported by the Sage **Parāśara** according to **Viṣṇu-Purāṇa.**

5. Action and Knowledge

Viṣṇu-purāṇa harmonizes the practice of both **Karma-mārga,** the path of action and **Jñāna-mārga,** the path of knowledge **Keśidhvaja**, the expert in spiritual knowledge, practised **Avidyā** or **Karma-Yoga** with non-attachment and complete spiritual awareness (**Brahma-Vidyā**) in order to go beyond death and attain **Vimukti,** the supreme freedom from suffering. He had learnt the techniques of **Karma Yoga** from **Khāṇḍikya.** On the other hand, **Khāṇḍikya,** the well-versed one in **Karma-mārga,** became finally equipped with the eight-fold **Yoga** by learning it from **Keśidhvaja,** devoted himself to **Yogic** meditation, and ultimately became

merged with **Brahma**, the superbly pure, also known as **Viṣṇu** (V.P.: 6.7 104), the Supreme Consciousness. Thus, it is evident that knowledge with action and action with knowledge are important aspects of **Yogic** ideal of spiritual practice.

The state of freedom (**Hānam**) from suffering (**Heya**) is only possible through the **Yogic** practice (**Hanopāya**) called **Brahma-Yoga** by unveiling the curtain of darkness of ignorance (**Heya-hetu**), the cause of suffering **Nis-saṅgatā mukti-padam yatīnām** (V P 4 2 124), i.e., the supreme state of **Mukti** is only possible by cultivating **Nis-saṅgatā**, the non-craving or non-attachment, on the path of **Yoga**; because without this pre-requisite of **Nis-saṅgatā**, even the great **Yogīs** become the victims of downfall. Hence, one must clearly understand the fact through **Svādhyāya** and practise **Yoga** successfully **Yoga** and Svādhyāya, practice and study, are the two eyes with which one can clearly see the Supreme known as **Brahma, Parama Dhāma, Parama Pada or Viṣṇu. Viṣṇu Purāṇa** (6 5 68) declares—

> *"tad brahma tat param dhāma*
> *tad-dhyeyaṁ mokṣa-kāṅkṣibhih,*
> *śruti-vākyoditam sūksmam*
> *tad visnoh paramam padam"*

i e., the supreme state (**parama dhāma**) is called **Brahma** upon which those who have the will to attain freedom from suffering, meditate, and it is verily the supreme state (**parama-padam**) of **Bhagavān Viṣṇu**, the Supreme Consciousness This is the divine revelation as recorded by the **Yogīs** and the sages in the past.



What does Lord Viṣṇu want us to do ?

—Rajendra Behari Lal

It is good and necessary to know about Lord Visnu. It is very useful to love and adore him But it is essential to know and do what he expects us to do, for love and knowledge are barren if they do not lead to acts of service

Viṣṇu Sahasranāma

The Visnu Sahasra Nāma, or 'A Thousand Names of God', is a famous episode in the Mahābhārata It was imparted to Yudhisthira by Bhīsma Pitāmaha lying on his death-bed of arrows It is popular with aspirants One remarkable feature of this series of divine names is that though some of them—such as Vāsudeva, Krsna, Keśava, Rāma and Govinda—are mythological or traditional names of God, the vast majority of them are simply important attributes, manifestations or functions of God which can be assimilated by frequent recitation

First Name of Viṣṇu-Viśva

The very first word in Visnu Sahasra Nāma, namely Viśva or universe, exalts the world by identifying it with God The world is God not only in name but also in reality It is his material form because he has produced it out of Himself It is not impure or unholy, nor a trap or vale of tears It is God's temple, home workshop, Kingdom, recreation and delight Therefore the world should be looked upon with love and reverence and not with hatred or animosity It follows that the foremost duty of man is the unity, maintenance and development of the world, for which the Gita has used the word 'Lokasangraha' Works of Lokasangraha are essential not only for maintaining life but also for spiritual advancement

Secular duties promote spiritual development as surely as do religious works Śrī Krsna has categorically declared "It is through action alone that Janaka and other wise men reached perfection Having an eye to Lokasangraha also you should take to action

(III 20) Every one by being devoted to his professional and other duties contributes to Loksangraha and attains the highest perfection, for thereby he worships the Lord from whom the whole creation has emanated and who pervades the universe" (XVIII 45-46)

The second Name of Viṣṇu

Visnu, the second name in Visnu Sahasra Nāma, means the All-Pervading Elaborating the first name, that is the world, it leads to some vital rules of conduct All beings are not only enlivened and created by God, but are actually his material forms. They are inter-related and inter-dependent Therefore the pleasure and pain of each are shared by all No one can do good to another without benefiting himself as well as the whole society The best way to acquire happiness is to give happiness to others As God is, and pervades all things, what is done to the body is actually done to the soul (Jīvātmā) and what is done to the Jīvātmā is actually done to the Parmātmā Therefore to serve God let us serve our fellow beings

God has very graciously placed himself at our disposal in the form of our fellow beings—those who help us and those who need our help The Avyakta or unmanifested God in heaven can be adequately adored by means of meditation and other conventional Sādhanās But the God in the world and in living beings can be worshipped only by acts of loving service To maintain and develop one's own body is Dharma, to maintain and develop the bodies of others is Parama Dharma In the words of Tulasīdāsa there is no Dharma or duty like doing good to others

As father, mother grand-father and friend of all creatures, God is very much interested in their welfare and advancement (Gītā, IX 17-18, V 29) He expects all to do their best for one another and for the world He likes and rewards those who help their fellows to live a richer, fuller and nobler life He punishes those who are cruel, unjust or indifferent to their fellows

The Third Name of Viṣṇu—Yajña

Very appropriately the third name of God in Viṣṇu Sahasra Nāma is Yajña This word occurs in several other names, for

example Mahā Yajña (677), Yajñapati (972), Yajñabhuk (679) Yajña-sādhana (980) and Yajña-vāhana (975).

Yajña is the outpouring of life for the benefit of others. It includes worship but in common usage it means sacrifice, any act of duty, voluntary service, charity, mutual help or collective effort for the welfare of society

According to Śrī Kṛṣṇa Yajña is the supreme duty of man It is at the same time a fundamental law of life and also of spiritual growth Even Viṣṇu is sacrificing Himself in creating, sustaining and ruling the world Self-centred activity binds, sacrificial or altruistic activity frees the spirit The spirit lives and triumphs by sacrifice, as the body thrives and evolves by wisely directed activity Every detail and aspect of Yajña is identified with God.

The Gītā enjoins "Prajāpati emanated mankind together with sacrifice" (III 10) "The world is bound by action except that done for the sake of sacrifice With such object, free from attachment, perform thou action" (III 9) "This world is not for the non-sacrificer, how then the other ?" (IV 31)

"I am the enjoyer and also the lord of all sacrifices, but they know me not in reality, hence they fall (IX 24) Having known me in reality as the enjoyer of all sacrifices and austerities, the Supreme Lord of all the worlds and the friend of all beings, my devotee attains peace" (V 29)

Universal Religion

The lesson of Yajña or doing good to others has been summed up in Śrī Krsna's famous injunction 'Rejoice in the good of all creatures', which occurs twice in the Gītā (V 25, XII 4)

There is a widespread belief that faith, devotion, worship and meditation are the sole and sure means of God realisation, while secular works, because they take up the place of religious activities, are only a waste of time Secular works, even those which do good to others, cannot qualify a man for the love and grace of God At best they are a preparation for the practice of meditation and other Sādhanās, which alone can enable man to realize God

A critical study of the scriptures, however, reveals that the truth

is just the reverse and religious pursuits are spiritually rewarding only if and to the extent that they lead to dedicated selfless service of fellow beings

Prakrti, that is Nature, is characterised by three qualities-Sattva (goodness), Rajas (passion) and Tamas (dullness), or their mixtures in different proportions Those who are established in Sattva (goodness) rise upwards, the Rājasa remain in the middle, the Tāmasa steeped in the lower tendencies, sink downwards (XIV 18) According to the Gītā there is no entity here on earth, in heaven or among celestials, or anywhere else in creation, which is free from these three qualities born of Prakrti (XVIII 40) All men and all actions are divisible into these three categories, and devotees and religious pursuits are no exception

In the Bhāgavata Śrī Krsna has classified devotees into three grades "When a man or woman worships me with great devotion and performs his duties without any selfish motive, he or she should be known as possessed of a Sāttvika nature When they worship me for the attainment of their desires, for the sake of wealth and blessings, they should be known as possessed of a Rājasika nature, and if they worship me in order to do injury to others, they are of a Tāmasika nature" (XI 25 10-11) In the Bhāgavata Bhagavān Kapila also gave a similar classification of devotees. (XIII.29 8—10)

Expounding a similar classification of devotees the Adhyātma Rāmāyana concludes "As the nature of a devotee, so the quality of his devotion" (VII 7 60)

Grades of works

In omnibus pronouncements both the Bhāgavata and the Gītā have divided all works (including religious) into the same three grades For example in the Bhāgavata Śrī Krsṇa says "Work done for my sake or without desire for fruit are Sāttvika Those done with desire for fruit are Rājasika and those done for the purpose of injuring others are Tāmasika" (XI 25 2). Similar is Śrī Krsna's teaching in the Gītā (XVIII 23—25)

Tapasyā (austerity), which includes worship, Japa, meditation and other religious activities has been divided in the Gītā into

three grades—Śāttvika, Rājasa and Tāmasa (XVII.14—19) "This three fold austerity, performed by men with the utmost faith and without desire for profit, is said to be Sāttvika The austerity which is practised with the object of gaining respect honour and worship or for ostentation, which is unstable and fleeting is said to be Rājasika The austerity done under a deluded understanding, with self-torture or with the object of doing injury to another, is declared to be Tāmasa (XVII 17—19).

Renunciation of the Fruit of Action

The Gītā teaching begins with a call to renounce the fruit of actions (II 47) It is the crown and culmination of all religious Sādhanās, as declared by the Gītā "Better is knowledge than practice, better than knowledge is meditation, better than meditation is the renunciation of the fruit of actions, on renunciation follows peace" (XII 12) Renunciation of the fruit of actions is not recommended as a substitute for conventional religious exercises, but as a supplement to them In spiritual disciplines it is the last step which is indispensable to make human works, specially religious pursuits, Sāttvika and without which no spiritual progress is possible

The fact is that religious acts are just aids to the fulfilment of desires which may be good, bad or mixed Adoration can be of great help to those who are keen to make their life sublime On the other hand, Sādhanās and their fruits can also be misused for evil purposes as exemplified in the lives of demons, devils and many other figures of mythology This is also happening on a large scale today Most of the religious activities are Rājasika or Tāmasika because the need of making them Sāttvika by devoting them to the service of the God in fellow beings, is not appreciated.

The Gītā has pointed out that not all devotees are dear to Śrī Krsna , but only those who, apart from their other noble attributes are friendly and compassionate to all beings

Responsibility of Great Men

The popular notion is that Moksa is the final goal of life and is attainable only after death But this idea is wrong, because as a man is during life, so he is after death Death by itself cannot

liberate a soul from the fetters of worldliness and selfishness in which it has bound itself. A Jīvanmukta must remain active in order to maintain his health even if he is not required to earn a living. He should not live as a parasite but must repay his debt to society. He must work for the welfare of his fellow men. He must set a good example as directed by the Gītā: "Whatsoever a great man does, that others also do. Whatever standard he sets the world follows" (III 21)

As a matter of fact, the attainment of personal salvation does not mark the end of human responsibility or human effort. Citing his own example, Śrī Krsna says: "There is nothing in the three worlds for me to do, nor is there anything worth attaining unattained by me, yet I continue to work. Should I not engage in action unwearied at any time, great harm will come to the world, for Arjuna, men follow my way in all respects" (III 22—23)

The least a realized soul can do is to spread the gospel of love and selfless service in order to make ideal men, women and society. This would be work of great merit, for at the end of the Gītā Śrī Krsna says: "He who teaches this supreme secret to my devotees showing the highest devotion to me, without doubt he shall come to me. Nor is there any among men who performeth dearer service to me than he, nor any other shall be more beloved by me on earth than he" (XVIII 68—69)

Summary

To sum up, Lord Visnu prescribes the following duties for his devotees:

Work enthusiastically for Lokasangraha, unity, welfare and development of mankind.

Combine service with worship and sanctify the latter with the former.

Make all religious pursuits Sāttvika by utilising their fruits for the good of others or society.

Rejoice in doing good to all creatures.

Perform all duties, whether sacred or secular, efficiently, for the sake and pleasure of God and for the good of fellow beings.

Perform the work not only efficiently but with superlative efficiency.

Realise that secular works are essential not only for maintaining life but also for cultivating divine qualities and developing spirituality

Perform all actions in the spirit of Yajña of self-sacrifice, even as Visnu is sacrificing Himself.

Realise that Lord Visnu, as the preserver of the universe, wants everyone to beautify and ennoble the world and leave it better than he had found it

At all times remember Me and fight (do your duty) With mind and reason thus surrendered to Me, you will doubtless come to Me (Gītā VIII 7)

My devotee should do all his works for My sake and while doing them should develop the practice of remembering Me In a short while his mind and heart would become established in Me (Bhāgavata XI 29 9)

Look upon all beings as Myself (Śrī Krsna) and shape your conduct towards them accordingly in thought, word and deed This, I think, is the best method of worship (Bhāgavata XI 29 19)

Strive not only for your own salvation but also for the spiritual upliftment of fellow beings



Viṣṇu in Ṛgveda

—Pratul Chandra Chaudhuri

Visnu appears in the Rgveda as a solar divinity The sun's adventure through the sky with its brilliant everchanging hues and its great power to dominate over the life and activities of man by creating day and night, captivated the minds of all ancient men and women Even the modern man with all his scientific knowledge has to admit that the Sun is the greatest factor in the biological activities of his life No wonder then that the Sun was worshipped as a god by all ancient societies The Indo-Āryans raised this devotion to the Sun to a high pitch Āditya, the great god representing the Sun has twelve aspects corresponding to twelve months Of these twelve Mitra, Varuṇa, Bhaga, Savitr, Visnu and Indra are the most important ones

So Visnu is worshipped in the Rgveda as one of these Ādityas Rgveda gives a description of Visnu in six rks (16—21) in the twenty second sūkta of its first Mandala These rks say—

अतो देवा अवन्तु नो यतो विष्णुर्विचक्रमे । पृथिव्या सप्त धामभिः ॥
इदं विष्णुर्वि चक्रमे त्रेधा नि दधे पदम् । समूह्ळमस्य पासुरे ॥
त्रीणि पदा वि चक्रमे विष्णुर्गोपा अदाभ्यः । अतो धर्माणि धारयन् ॥
विष्णो कर्माणि पश्यत यतो व्रतानि पस्पशे । इन्द्रस्य युज्यः सखा ॥
तद् विष्णोः परमं पदं सदा पश्यन्ति सूरयः । दिवीव चक्षुराततम् ॥
तद् विप्रासो विपन्यवो जागृवांसः समिन्धते । विष्णोर्यत् परमं पदम् ॥

May the devas protect us from the earth from which Visnu strode with seven rays[1] He strode these three worlds He planted His foot thrice The dust of His foot-steps covered the whole world Visnu is the protector of all Nobody can strike Him He established Dharma by three strides Behold the activities of Visnu Seeing these the worshipper performs his Vratas Visnu is Indra's genuine friend As the eyes open wide and see the sky, so the wise ones see the Supreme State of Visnu The prayerful and ever-awakened wise men realize the Supreme State of Visnu

Yāska comments on these rks: 'Whatever is there, is a manifestation of the power of Visnu. His three steps are the threefold aspects of, existence in the earth, in ether and in heaven. So says Śākapūni.'

Though only six rks were dedicated to Visnu, the rsi thinks of Him as the highest God, as can be inferred from the words—'the Supreme State of Visnu'. The Vaidika rsi contemplates that Visnu is the immanent all-pervasive principle. By two strides He covers the whole relative world and by the third stride He transcends all the limitations of earthly existence and rises to the super-conscious region.



रूपं यत् तत् प्राहुरव्यक्तमाद्यं ब्रह्म ज्योतिर्निर्गुणं निर्विकारम्।
सत्तामात्रं निर्विशेषं निरीहं स त्वं साक्षाद् विष्णुरध्यात्मदीपः ॥
नष्टे लोके द्विपरार्धावसाने महाभूतेष्वादिभूतं गतेषु।
व्यक्तेऽव्यक्तं कालवेगेन याते भवानेकः शिष्यते शेषसंज्ञः ॥

Devakī prayed: You are Lord Visnu Himself, the Illuminator of (all) psycho-physical organisms, the indefinable Reality which the Vedas declare as the unmanifest cause consisting of (mere) consciousness, transcending the three Gunas, absolute existence, unqualified and devoid of activity. When at the end of two Parārdhas (constituting the lifetime of Brahmā) the universe (consisting of seven higher and seven lower worlds) is dissolved (into its constituent elements), by force of Time the (five) gross elements are ultimately merged (along with the ten Indriyas and the mind including the deities presiding over them) in Ahankāra (their cause), (Ahankāra is merged in the Mahat-tattva), the Mahat-tattva in the Unmanifest (and the Unmanifest in yourself), you alone are left and (called by the name of *Śesa* (lit., the residue).

—*Bhāgavata (X 3 24-25)*



Oneness of Lakṣmī and Viṣṇu

—*J L Srivastava*

When a man wakes up after a short dreamless sleep of a few hours he finds that his mind (Manas) also wakes up with him with all its assistants viz five intelligent senses and five executive ones also become active Similarly, when Visnu wakes up after a long long sleep, the potentiality of the universe to be made again exists in him and that propels the Prāna, the original energy to emerge from Visnu That Prāṇa is called Ādi Śakti and Visnu is called 'Prānasya Prānah' i e Prāna of Prāna (Ādiśakti) From Prāna emerges the Cosmic mind, from which the Pañca Bhūtas, viz Space, Air, Fire, Water, and Earth originate From these Pañca Bhūtas emerge Sapta Lokas—Bhūh,[1] Bhuvah,[2] Svah,[3] Mahah[4] Janah [5] Tapah,[6] and Satyam[7] In these worlds innumerable creatures, in invisible forms, aspiring for shapes wander here and there and perceiving the five elements adjacent to them, hasten to assume shapes from them according to their propensities All the seven worlds are thus filled with population according to their atmosphere and the affairs of the worlds commence again

All this is due to Visnu's Prāṇa viz Ādiśakti, which takes charge of the entire universe with the inspiration ever replenished by Visnu Thus both are inter-connected and are inseparable The universe emerged from Prāna and Prāna from Viṣnu

Lack of direct, solid perception of Visnu led some preceptors to imagine God of their own They forgot that the world is God Himself,as the same emerged from God only Bewildered by lack of correct knowledge they hastened to call the world unreal, and were shamelessly eating the unreal world

Other adopted a scientific way of calling the world too real But they could not deny the existence of God already ruling over the world Then they adopted an easy path of adopting more than one truth

Both these classes of preceptors have created a confusion among the innocent people for the last one thousand years, who misled by the preceptors, laughed at the idea of the world being called God Instead they happened to worship imaginary gods as told by the preceptors This led to quarrels wordy and physical and man is gasping for peaceful moments

Lord Krsna has emphatically declared in Gītā (VII.7) that there is nothing else in the world besides the truth In other words it can be said that the world is nothing but the Truth or God Himself This conclusion is unequivocally supported by Mundakopanisad(II 2 11) that the world is the purest Brahma Ādi Sankarācārya, in his comment on this, says that appearance of the world in a different form from the truth is due to lack of correct knowledge of the truth

It is the everyday experience of every man that the world is hard or soft thick or thin, big or small, sweet or bitter, pleasant or painful and so on This experience comes to be known when the human body or any part of it comes in contact with the world or anything of the world The world in itself, is neither hard nor soft etc By naming the experience as hard, soft etc , we name the contact of the human body with the world If we keep aloof, is then the world hard, soft etc? Hence it is not true to say that the world is hard soft etc Names also have no independent existence If we keep the names of bodily contacts with the world aside, the world will appear to be as pure as Brahma, nameless, harmless

Śrī Krsna says to Uddhava in Śrīmad Bhāgavata (XI 87 36) that it denotes lack of correct insight to see variety of things in one lonely truth, only through names having no base of their own Again in the same (X 87 37) description of the world, in the truth is nothing but names, which are entirely unreal and imaginary

Names and descriptions are necessary for facility of day to day dealings, but the names and descriptions are not the things wanted They vanish in the things after they are available An article is sweet or bitter, not the name

Suppose you have got an apple The apple has got two distinct aspects in itself One is its appearance and the other is its

substance The appearance is not the substance, nor is the substance the appearance Both the phenomena are inseparably interconnected One cannot exist without the other You remove the appearance (which is not possible), the substance will be zero Similarly, the substance cannot be removed without removing the appearance The substance is known from the appearance from the past experience You see the appearance and immediately know the qualities possessed by that appearance The substance is visible only through the appearance and it can never suffer non-existence So Satyam is the name of the existence connoting inseparably both the aspects viz appearance and substance together Appearance is Laksmī and substance is Viṣnu In fact name is unnecessary It is necessary only to denote the perfection of existence After that it has no value Then only the experience viz Ānandam remains

The truth is perfect bliss and everybody is that bliss Hence experience of that bliss is the final aim of every man In order to attend that bliss one has to forget all wishes and desires, which are one's own making He has to do only those deeds, for which he has been physically and mentally made This practice will carry him smoothly through his entire career and he will never find himself involved in any unhappy predicament He has to go his own way He has no right to emulate others, as this habit will carry him nowhere and he will rather tease the onlookers Moreover, he will be driven away from the path of eternal bliss the aim of his life The practice of non-attachment to desires will make him a wanted gentleman in the public life also and he will be loved by all A man of his own likes and dislikes is hated by everyone

The world is not separate from the God God is the world and the world is the God himself Therefore, it has been ordained (Gītā XVIII 46) that a man who wants to purify himself from all evils, to make himself fit for the bliss has to serve all human beings and all creatures through the deeds he has been made to do He cannot avoid his duties to himself as well as to others Maintenance of his own body will drive him to take up work (Gītā III 8)

There is an episode in the Brahma Vaivarta Purāna that Brahmā, Maheśa and Nārāyana went to Goloka to see Krsna so that they may imbibe fresh energy In the Krsna Bhavana Rādhā appeared at the door and the three great deities fell unconscious due to dazzling light of Śrī Rādhā When they came to senses, Rādhā told them that Krsna, without her, is invisible 'He is in me' She said 'If you want to see Śrī Krsna look at me He is in my heart I am Śrī Krsna '



सम्यग्व्यवसिता बुद्धिस्तव राजर्षिसत्तम। वासुदेवकथायां ते यज्जाता नैष्ठिकी रतिः ॥
वासुदेवकथाप्रश्नः पुरुषांस्त्रीन् पुनाति हि। वक्तारं पृच्छकं श्रोतॄंस्तत्पादसलिलं यथा ॥

Śrī Śuka replied your mind has arrived at a right conclusion, O jewel among royal sages as a sequal to which lasting devotion to the story of lord Vāsudeva has sprung up in your heart An inquiry concerning the story of lord Vāsudeva indeed purifies all the three persons viz the reciter the inter-locater and the audience (even) as the water touched by the lord s feet (the water in which an image of the lord has been washed or the Gangā) hallows all

—*Bhāgavata (X 1 15 16)*

सर्वभूतस्थितं यो मां भजत्येकत्वमास्थितः।
सर्वथा वर्तमानोऽपि स योगी मयि वर्तते ॥

The Yogī who is established in union with Me, and worships Me as residing in all beings (as their very Self), abides in Me, no matter what he does

—*Gītā VI 31*

असंशयं महाबाहो मनो दुर्निग्रहं चलम्।
अभ्यासेन तु कौन्तेय वैराग्येण च गृह्यते ॥

The mind is restless no doubt, and difficult to curb Arjuna, but it can be brought under control by repeated practice (of meditation) and by the exercise of dispassion, O son of Kuntī

—*Gītā VI 35*



Vaiṣṇavas of sixteenth Century

—Brij Lal Aggarwal

In the sixteenth Century A D Swāmī Rāmānandajī Mahārāja was born in Kāśī He is considered the first guru of 'Vairāgī Sampradāya' He has thrown away the difference of caste and creed in his cult of Bhakti He gives equal rights to all caste people in God's devotion His moto is 'Pray to God,become His', nobody cares for caste and creed. After him we see his twelve disciples who all belong to lower caste—Shoe maker, weaver and barber etc. Among them Mahātmā Kabīra is much famous for his highest Sādhanā He is 'Parama Jñānī' a real saint, a loveable figure and fearless Due to animosity, people of high caste became his foes Mahātmā 'Ravi Dāsa' and 'Nāma Deva' were also born in the same age

There is a great importance of 'Bhajana and Sankīrtana' in sādhanā In the course of spiritual discipline (Sādhanā) Sankīrtana has its eminent place It can be particularly useful for the awakening of one's feelings, for concentrating thoughts and for feeling one's closeness to the divinity When more than one participate, the quality and intensity of collective feeling creates vibrations of a corresponding intensity and dimension and the divinity too responds in the same manner with a proportionate strength and intensity All are deeply imbured with the same changed feelings and atmosphere is also enormously changed In Bhajana Sankīrtana feelings should be more important The undulation of our voice and the rhythmical beat (svara and tāla) should just be the carrier of the same One should always be careful to see that these accompaniments in any case, do not submerge the feelings behind the Bhajana and take their place The utility of Sankīrtana should be judged by the effect it leaves on us.

The Bhajana is effective for the working of the divine Śakti This helps in awakening of the feelings It aroused feeling to activate the Śakti In this way the singing of songs and hearing of them is of considerable help in Sādhanā

In Punjab Guru Nānaka Deva was born at the time of Kabīra Dāsa He toured India for 12 years and established in Kartarpur People were greatly influenced by him Hearing his teachings people in lacs became his disciples—called Sikhas Later on Śrī Guru Govinda singha Jī constituted 'Sikha-saṅgha' of them. His eldest son Śrī Chandajī was a great man. He possessed renunciation, and hence had great influence on people He preached renunciation so his followers were called 'Udāsī'.

In Decan Samartha Guru Rāma Dāsa preached 'Rāma Bhakti'. His disciple Śivā Jī Mahārāja was not a militant only. He was a true devotee too. His aim of fighting was to save Hinduism and Brahmanism Due to him Bhajana, Kīrtana and Īśvara Bhakti spread in whole of Maharastra. Santa Tukā Rāma jī Mahārāja was also born at this time in Maharastra He sang and danced in love of 'Biṭṭhala Nātha'. Due to his true Bhakti and love Biṭṭhala Nātha gave him darśana. He lived with Him. He went to 'Vaikuṇṭh Dhāma' with his physical body.

In Kāśī, Bhagavān Śrī Vallabhācārya Jī was also born at the time Leaving Kāśī he made pious 'Gokulpurī' as his abode. 'Bāla Kṛṣṇa' was his 'Iṣṭa Deva'. He preached Śrī Kṛṣṇa Bhakti throughout India His seven sons also followed his suit At this time Prema Avatāra Śrī Bhagavān Caitanya Mahāprabhu was born in Bengal. He was God intoxicated man, a real Vaiṣṇava and a lovable figure.

These Vaiṣnavite saints had moulded the loves of people to a great extent towards God



The Significance of Yajño Vai Viṣṇuḥ

—*Prof K L Bhalla*

Viṣnu—Conservative principle—grew out of Vaidika conceptions He is the second god of Hindu triad He became specially the benefactor of man in His many incarnations. The word 'यज्ञ' is derived from 'यज्' which means 'to worship', 'to donate' and to be engaged in beneficial work. Viṣnu stands for all-pervading spirit. Verily 'यज्ञ' is 'विष्णु'।

All agents of nature—sun, moon, etc., are busy in the performance of 'यज्ञ' all the twenty four hours. To attain godhead one must lead a life based on 'यज्ञ', 'यज्ञ' connotes selfless work as preached by Lord Kṛṣṇa in the Gītā Such work is worship that can free a mortal from the worldly bondage. Any action performed for the welfare of all leads a man to the realization of Supreme Being which in other words means communion with the Infinite immanent in Nature.

According to Tagore—Where a man tries to raise himself to eminence by pushing and jostling all others, to achieve a distinction by which he prides himself to be more than everybody else , there he is alienated from the spirit 'यज्ञ' can put an end of this alienation Action of any kind, good or bad, becomes a source of enslavement unless it is done in a detached spirit, that is, without any desire for its fruit or return Disinterested action is the out come of love and promotes the spiritual liberation of the doer

'यज्ञो वै विष्णु' occurs in (शतपथ ब्राह्मण) The Indian sages attached a lot of significance to work done as a sacrifice in many sacred books. According to the Gītā—'Work done as a sacrifice for Viṣṇu has to be performed, otherwise work binds one to this material world, therefore, O son of Kuntī, perform your prescribed duties for His satisfaction, and in that way you will always remain unattached and free from bondage (Gītā III 9) '

Since man has to work even for the upkeep of his body [illegible] prescribed duties for a particular [illegible] [illegible] that that purpose [illegible] be fulfilled. All [illegible] [illegible] meant for the satisfaction of Lord Vis[illegible] [illegible] whether one performs Yajña or [illegible] [illegible] Lord [illegible]. Nothing should be done [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] be done for the pleasure of God.

Bhagavan Krsna [illegible] in the [illegible] the beginning of creation the Lord of all creatures sent forth [illegible] of men and demigods, along with sacrifices for Visnu and [illegible] by saying, 'Be happy by this Yajña [illegible] [illegible] bestow upon you all [illegible] things [illegible] [illegible] creation is an opportunity offered to the [illegible] Godhead. All living creatures are conditioned by the material nature. The Lord created the world [illegible] to perform 'Yajña' for obtaining the grace of Visnu [illegible] live here happily and [illegible]. We can [illegible] Blessedness.

The gods are administrators of material affairs. The supplies of air, light, water etc. are entrusted to the gods who are [illegible] in different parts of the body of the supreme personality. Their pleasures and displeasure depend on the performance of 'Yajñas' by the people. Visnu Himself is the beneficiary of all kinds of sacrifices. Satisfaction of the [illegible] is the main purpose of all Yajñas. When these Yajñas are executed the gods in charge of different departments are pleased and there is plentiful supply of natural produce.

All Yajñas are meant for purification of one's life and to promote one to the transcendental position. For every man 'Panca-mahayajñas' are unavoidable. [illegible] or [illegible] is necessary for purifying the atmosphere. Reading of scripture, or recitation of God's name is called [illegible]. To serve the parents and the elderly people is [illegible] [illegible] is to entertain the guests. By performing '[illegible]' one gets rid of the sins committed while killing unknowingly tiny creatures. Sri Caitanya started the Sankirtana Yajña.

A devotee should not accept anything without first offering it to

Visnu The performance of Yajñas keeps one always aloof from all kinds of contamination As laid down in the Gītā—'They who prepare food for satisfying their body or sense gratification, are not only thieves, but are also the eaters of all kinds of sin ' (Gītā III 13).

According to Wordsworth—

'The world is too much with us; late and soon
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers '

The philosophy of indulging in sense gratification is harmful The necessity of work for the satisfaction of Visnu must always be kept in view Unfortunately in today's world there is such a mad craving for amassing wealth that barring a few, most people are engaged in the pursuits that lead them nowhere rather than to hells

Many persons argue that desireless action is not possible If a man has no motive, he will not work at all This conviction is wrong In Gītā (III 19) Lord Krsna exhorts Arjuna, to do work efficiently in a detached spirit Had this been not possible for us to do detached work, how the Lord, Who is fully aware of our capability, could advise us to do work that way Therefore we should dispel this false notion that no work without motive is possible With our goal of God-realization or welfare of other people in view we can perform all work without expecting anything in return Whom we serve they will automatically look after our necessities If we study carefully what has been written in our holy books it will be crystal clear to us that whereas something done with a desire holds us in thraldom (निष्काम कर्म) makes free and happy 'Yajño Vai Visnuh' is the quintessence of Indian thought Our salvation lies in the acceptance and practice of this philosophy The present world is torn by stress and strife, quarrel and dissension The way-out to put an end to this sorry state of affairs is to live a selfless life aiming at the welfare of all creatures. He is the greatest gainer who gives to others

In the words of the Gītā—'Regulated activities are prescribed in the Vedas and the Vedas are directly manifested from the supreme personality of Godhead Consequently, the all-pervading Transcendence is eternally situated in acts of Sacrifice' (Gītā III 15)



Lord Viṣṇu

—T G Kasiram Davey

Śrīmad Rāmāyana and Mahābhārata are two great epics that India has produced Śrī Veda Vyāsa is the author of Mahābhārata which is considered to be the fifth Veda. It is a treasure house of literary gems. The famous and valuable gems that are embedded in Mahābhārata are Viṣṇu Sahasranāma Stotra, Śiva Sahasranāma Stotra, Bhagavadgītā Sanatsujātīya, Vidura Nīti, Yakṣa Praśna, Bhārata Sāvitrī besides Bhīsma's advice

Visnu Sahasranāma Stotram praises Lord Viṣṇu by thousand names The first name is Viśvam and second one is Visnu. Name Viṣṇu comes after the name Viśvam Ācārya Śankara has written a commentary on Viṣṇu Sahasranāma. The word Viṣṇu indicates both omnipresence and omniscience Visnu pervades the entire Viśvam, everywhere and everything He is Viśvam

This has been beautifully demonstrated in Mahābhārata itself Eleventh chapter of Bhagavadgītā describes Viśvarūpam of Lord, namely the cosmic form of Lord.

Krsna avatāra is the complete avatāra of Lord Visnu In the battlefield He reveals His cosmic form to the baffled Arjuna Only two persons are fortunate enough to perceive the cosmic form One is Arjuna and the other is Sañjaya. Arjuna observes the whole universe in the wonderful cosmic form which is beginningless, middleless and endless The sun and the moon are the eyes and the face is radiant like a flaming fire All the animate and inanimate objects are found there Arjuna has been reduced to an atom before the cosmic form. He gains tremendous strength to face the reality by the darśana of Supreme Lord.



Śrī Kṛṣṇa—Lord of Guruvayur

—Smt N Sita

The famous temple of Lord Krsna is situated in Kerala This idol is neither a swayambhū nor is it the outcome of human installation It is said to be made of 'Pathalañjana Śilā—black bismuth Water and oil used in the bathing the idol are believed to possess curative qualities Particularly the gingelly oil used in the Abhiṣekam is considered efficacious in the treatment of Rheumatism

One belief is that God Brahmā has given the idol to Prajāpati Sutapā and his wife Prśni who propitiated Him Sutapā worshipped this idol Lord Visnu was pleased with his sincere devotion and granted the boon that He could be born to them as their son three times. In the first incarnation He was named Prśnigarbha In the second they were born as Kaśyapa and Aditi Lord was born as Vāmana In their third life they were born as Vasudeva and Devakī and the Lord was born as Śrī Krsna In Dvaraka Lord Kṛsna had built a temple and installed the Supreme Self

On the eve of the submergence of Dvaraka He had instructed Uddhava to ask Guru (Bṛhaspati) and Vāyu to remove the image from Dvaraka and install it at a suitable place When they were searching for a place Paraśurāma, who created Kerala, had invited them to install the image there The place of installation came to be known as Guruvayur as both were involved in the search and installation.

Another legend says that King Janamejaya as a result of serpent sacrifice began to suffer from virulent leprosy At the instance of sage Dattātreya he performed austerities at Guruvayur and was cured of the disease This led to the foundation of the legend which describes the curative healing power in case of incurable diseases in the presence of the Lord Pilgrims take a vow to visit the temple or to make certain offerings Among the offerings the Lord is most pleased to hear is Nārāyanīyam

Mepatur Nārāyaṇa Bhattathir, coming from an illustrious family of scholars, was leading a wayward and dissolute life. A reprimand from Acyuta Piśaroti, who himself was a multifaced scholar, had the effect of opening a new leaf in his life. Under the guidance of Piśaroti the dormant brilliance surfaced The preceptor was attacked with rheumatism As a preceptor's fee—Guru Daksinā Bhattathir took over the disease

Extremely afflicted with the malady he approached Ezhuthachan a great scholar of the time Through a messenger Ezhuthachan sent back a message—'Ask him to begin with the fish and eat it' Bhattathir got the message and decided to compose the magnificent splendour of the Ten Avatāras of the Lord The poetical work is in the form of an address to Lord Guruvayurappan He had recited the glory of the Lord for 100 days, each day a Daśaka, with a total of 1036 stanzas, before the Lord It was said that Lord nodded approbation at the end of each Daśaka and also guided when the writer expressed a doubt or was in a dilema

When composing Narasimha Avatāra the writer expressed his dilema as to how to describe the Lord, when a cracking sound was heard of a pillar and out of which Man lion came out showing his form

In another case while dealing with Rāmāyana the composer was lost in the structure of the metre The context was. Hanumāna returning from Lankā with the hair ornament of Sītā He knew that it was to be given to Rāma but the metre does not permit the extra word 'Rāma' with two syllables The Lord stretched out his hand, the writer included one word 'te' meaning to you That showed Rāma and Guruvayurappan are one and the same

There were many other examples of divine play in the composition of Nārāyanīyam

Ever since Bhattathir began his composition, his rheumatism began to retreat and finally was cured This led to the popularity of Nārāyanīyam He had the vision of the Lord as he describes at the start of the 100 Daśaka—

अग्रे पश्यामि तेजो निबिडतरकलायावलीलोभनीयं
पीयूषाप्लावितोऽहं तदनु तदुदरे दिव्यकैशोरवेषम्।

तारुण्यारम्यरम्यं परमसुखरसास्वादरोमाञ्चिताङ्गै-
रावीतं नारदाद्यैः विलसदुपनिषत्सुन्दरीमण्डलैश्च ॥

The 100th day coincided with Ekādaśi coming in the bright half of Nov/Dec , on which day Lord Krsna imparted Gītā to Arjuna

Pūnthanam, another staunch devotee of the Lord had written Jñānappana in Malayālam and approached Bhattathir for his opinion but he later having a poor opinion of books in Malayālam had asked Pūnthanam to learn Samskrta Poor Pūnthanam wept before the Lord who being moved by the sincere devotion, called on Bhattathir, who then was composing Nārāyniyam, as a bāla brahmacārī Lord got into a discussion with Meppatur and pointed out errors in stanza after stanza of the Daśaka under composition Bhattathir was perplexed and suddenly realised that the Lord was before him The lord made him realise that Bhakti (Devotion) is more important than Vibhakti (Grammar or erudition)

Many a tale is told of the Lord coming to the rescues of the devotee in distress It was remarked—The greatness of a temple is due to the faith of the devotee Just as Bhaktas lived by the faith of the Lord, the Lord himself shines through the Devotees

The elephants in Guruvayur temple are a unique phenomenon It has a large number, all brought to the Lord by his devotees as offerings While most of the other Kerala temples will have Sīveli (procession) of the Deity with one elephant only during annual festival, in Guruvayur it is said to be a daily feature On festival days there will be more elephants with all lamps on the 'Vilakku-mattam' (wooden frame work with rows of lamps surrounding the cloister) lighted for the night 'Sīveli' It is a feast to the eyes—can be truely described as 'Bhūloka Vaikuntha '

The temple is open from 3 A M to 10 P M with short gaps of closure The entry is free, no charges at all One can have darśana of the Lord as many times as one wishes

Guruvayur is 29 Km from Trichur, another famous place of pilgrimage, which is on the main railway line from Coimbatore to Cochin



Lord Viṣṇu is Immanent

—V N Sharma

Lord Visnu is the supreme God He is all-pervading He is in every thing and every thing is in Him He is beginningless and endless He is both visible and invisible. He is unborn and immortal He assumes innumerable forms beyond description His existence cannot be denied even in a molecule. Only the saints know this fact In short, we can say that Lord Visnu is omnifarious, omnific, omniform, omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient. Religions of the world sing His praise in some form or the other. There are no restrictions of time, place or qualifications in regard to the chanting of His name It may be chanted in all places at all times and by all persons Thus it is evident that everyone possesses the right to chant the name of Viṣnu in any form throughout the world

It is not only the Purāṇas which sing the glory of the sacred Name of Lord Visnu but His glory is also sung even by the Rgveda, the oldest scripture of the world thus—

"आस्य जानन्तो नाम चिद् विवक्तन महस्ते विष्णो सुमतिं भजामहे"

(1 156 3)

This mantra has been explained by Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī in his Bhakti-sandarbha as follows—

"O Visnu, your name partakes of the essence of 'cit' or consciousness Itself, therefore it is self luminous if we utter the Name even without knowledge of its correct Pronunciation and value (that is even if we know it imperfectly) Through such repetition only of the letters constituting your Name, we shall come to know the Reality about you "

The entire universe is permeated with the Power of Lord Visnu This Omnipresent Power in everything is Lord Visnu Himself, controlling and keeping everything in its form This all bearing and all pervading Power gives the Lord the most beloved appellation of Visnu The Visṇupurāna sings His glory as under—

यस्माद्विष्टमिदं विश्वं तस्य शक्त्या महात्मनः ।
तस्मात्स प्रोच्यते विष्णुर्विशेर्धातोः प्रवेशनात् ॥

(III 1 45)

The Bhāgavata further says—

एकस्त्वमात्मा पुरुषः पुराणः सत्यः स्वयंज्योतिरनन्त आद्यः ।
नित्योऽक्षरोऽजस्रसुखो निरञ्जनः पूर्णोऽद्वयो मुक्त उपाधितोऽमृत. ॥

(X 14 23)

"He alone is the soul, the eternal Being, real, selfluminous, infinite, the primordial cause of all constant, imperishable, always happy, untainted by Māyā (illusion), self-sufficient, Peerless, unqualified (absolute) and immortal "

Our intellect forces upon us the conclusion that this purposive creation has primordial (आदि), eternal (सनातन), unborn (अज) imperishable (अविनाशी) and ubiquitous (जगद्व्यापक) efficient cause, who is endowed with infinite Power (अनन्तशक्ति सम्पन्न) and is all existent, all intelligent and all-blissful (सत्-चित्-आनन्दस्वरूप) That one indescribable power is called by thousands of names such as Īśvara, Parmeśvara, Parabrahma, Nārāyana, Bhagavān, Vāsudeva, Śiva, Rāma, Krsna, Visnu, Jihovā, God, Khudā, Allāh etc *

In the holy Koran, the praise of the Lord is sung as under—

"अलहम्दो लिल्लाहे रब्बिल आल्मीन"

"All praise be to God, *the Lord of all the world* "

In the Upanisads, the same thing echos as below—

"वन्दे विष्णुं भवभयहरं सर्वलोकैकनाथम्"

"Obeisance to Lord Visnu, the dispeller of the fears of the world and *the Lord of all the worlds* "

The words 'Rab-bil-ālmīn' and 'Sarva-Lokaika-Nātham' in the above hymns are identical in meaning without the least difference

* The immanence of God by Pandita Madan Mohan Mālavīya p 7—17

if we earnestly try to get at their meaning given to them by the saintly persons or the God realisers These refer to the one and the same God, Visṇu

In the Śvetāśvatara Upanisad, the glory of the Lord is sung thus—

एको देवः सर्वभूतेषु गूढ.
सर्वव्यापी सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा ।
कर्माध्यक्षः सर्वभूताधिवासः
साक्षी चेता केवलो निर्गुणश्च ॥

(VI 11)

Only one effulgent Being sits hidden in every creature, Pervading all, the Innerself of all created things, the witness, the Intelligent Principle, the absolute, devoid of all attributes

Quite strange is the quality of Lord Visṇu that He is latent in the bottomless sea and apparent in the pearl-like bright morning dew drop on the petal of a blooming flower or on a blade of grass He may not be traceable in the whole flora and fauna but one may find Him sitting hidden and huddled in the heart of a bud of Jasmine in the form of fragrance The scorching heat of the sun in summer days and the calm chilly moon-lit nights of winter both do bear witness of His Being The whole universe is but His reflection He may cause it to disappear in a jiffy and can recreate it in the twinkling of an eye Such are, in short, the qualities of Lord Visnu

So long as our mind is obfuscated by ignorance, we are unable to realise the *Sakala-Viśvarūpa* 'सकल विश्वरूप' of Lord Visnu The moment this darkness is removed, we can see before us, the most beautiful and blissful image of the Lord Stretching out His four arms with the celebrated conch-shell, discus, mace and lotus in them, showering His nectarean bliss on all the 'lokas'

Indescribable and ineffable are the virtues and qualities of Visnu as Kabīradāsa says in the following distich—

सात समद की मसि करो, लेखन सब वन राय ।
धरती सब कागद करो, हरिगुन लिखा न जाय ॥

If I make ink of the water of the seven seas, make pens of all

the wood of all the forests; and use the whole globe as writing paper even then all this material will fall short in writing the qualities of Visnu



नॉव रे, नॉव रे, नॉव रे, सकल सिरोमनि नॉव रे।
मैं बलिहारी नॉव रे॥
दूतर तारै, पार उतारै, नरक निवारै नॉव रे।
तारण हारा भौजल पारा, निरमल सारा नॉव रे॥
नूर दिखावै, तेज मिलावै, जोति जगावै नॉव रे।
सब सुखदाता, अमृतराता, दादू माता नॉव रे॥

The Name, the Name, O the Name ! the crest-jewel of all is the Name, I am a sacrifice unto the Name
It gives salvation difficult to attain, and wards off the hell, O the Name !
It takes across the waters of the world, it is purity in essence, O the Name !
It shows the light, in the bright effulgence It merges one, it kindles the inner flame, O the Name !
It is the giver of all happiness, it is nectar Dādū is fond of and intoxicated by it, O the Name !

—Bani (Belvedere) II p 116

The Lord says The devotee whose voice gets choked with emotion, whose heart melts with love, who now weeps, now laughs, now dances without any reserve and sings My Name and glory at the top of his voice—no wonder that such a blessed Devotee purifies, himself, nay, he sanctifies the whole world (by his sight and speech)



Is the Worship of Lord Viṣṇu of recent Origin ?

—Swami Shivananda

Many argue that the worship of Lord Visnu is of recent origin Among them some go even so far to say that even during the time of Śrīmat Śankarācārya the worship of Lord Visṇu was not in vogue and they argue, that that is why Śrīmat Śaṅkarācārya was a believer and preacher of the doctrine of Advaitavāda

But this is not so Let us try to find out the truth from Śruti, Smrti and Purānas. Many also believe that Vaisnava sect came into existence only after 700 Christian era. ie, after Śrīmat Śaṅkarācārya, which is also not correct However, in this connection we should keep in mind that the Vaisnava sect follows the path of devotion for their salvation

However, in various stanzas of Rg-Veda we find many mantras singing the glory of Lord Viṣnu as well as many prayers offered to him Some are as follows—

In Ṛg-Veda (1.156 3) and in Taittiriya Brāhmana (2 4 3 9)—

महस्ते विष्णो सुमतिं भजामहे ।
न ते विष्णो जायमानो न जातो देव महिम्नः परमन्तमाप ।

(Rg VII 99 2)

तद् विष्णोः परमं पदं सदा पश्यन्ति सूरय. ।
दिवीव चक्षुराततम् (Rg I 22 20)

अग्निर्वै देवानामवमो विष्णुः परम-
स्तदन्तरेण सर्वा अन्या देवताः ।

(Aytareya Br I 1 1 2)

Apart from this, in a Mantra of Rg-Veda (1 22.18) it has been said that Lord Viṣnu is the Saviour (गोपा) of this world and not only this but He is at the root of all Dharma— धर्माणि धारयन् Similarly in a Rg Mantra, we find Lord Visṇu has a big-body (वृहच्छरीर) Though Lord Visnu dominates all, yet He is bound by the devotion of His

devotees In another Rg-Mantra the sages pray "तदस्य प्रियमभिपाथो अश्या नरो यत्र देवयवो मदन्ति" Let it be that I may become dear to Lord Visnu where the devotees of the Lord enjoy all bliss In a couplet in the Visnu Purāna we find—

दिवीव चक्षुराततं योगिनां तन्मयात्मनाम् ।
विवेकज्ञानदृष्ट च तद्विष्णोः परम पदम् ॥
(II 8 105)

Apart from these, in various other Upanisads and Purānas, there are many instructions about Lord Visnu's Upāsanā In a mantra of Chāndyogya Upanisad (3 17 6) there is a mention about Devakī's son Śrī Krsna

तद्धैतद् घोर आङ्गिरसः कृष्णाय देवकीपुत्रायोक्त्वो-
वाचापिपास एव स बभूव ।

Regarding this Dr Sarvapallī Rādhākrsnan has mentioned in his Introductory Essays on the Bhagavada Gītā, p 28—1948–"The Chāndogya Upanisad refers to Krsna Devakīputra, son of Devakī "

Now these are all our eastern views, but if we turn towards the west, we find the same opinion there too Western philosopher like Keith, Hopkins, Macdonell have arrived at the same conclusion They opined in the Vaidika India Vol I—p 238, about Visnu thus —

'Visnu the Vaidika deity, with whom Krsna is identified in the Pre-christian Taittirīya Āranyaka is called in the Rg Veda "Gopāh "

Therefore, from all the above statements, it is amply proved that the Vaisnava Sampradāya and the worship of Lord Visnu had its origin in the age of the Veda and it is not of recent origin as is supposed by many



Viṣṇu: The Ultimate Reality

In our Aryan classics Lord Visnu is pre-eminently conceived of as having triple forms (1) Paravisnu (2) Mahāvisnu and (3) Visnu Dealing with these triple forms it has been said in the Nārada Purāna—

विष्णोस्तु त्रीणि रूपाणि पुरुषाख्यान्यतो विदुः ।
एक तु महत. स्रष्टृ द्वितीयं त्वण्डसंस्थितम् ॥
तृतीय सर्वभूतस्थं तानि ज्ञात्वा विमुच्यते ।

It means that Lord Visnu has triple forms The scholars know Him as Purusa—the Eternal Being. The first form is responsible for the creation of fundamental elements the other pervades the universe in His all pervasive aspect and the third permeates all animate creation Whosoever knows in essence all these three forms of Lord Visnu is extricated from the bondage of Nature—the whirling of birth and death

(1) प्रथम महत· स्रष्टृ—The first form of Lord Visnu is responsible for the creation of Mahattatva (Cosmic intelligence) Manu Mahārāja puts it thus—

तत. स्वयम्भूर्भगवानव्यक्तो व्यञ्जयन्निदम् ।
महाभूतादि वृत्तौजा. प्रादुरासीत्तमोनुद· ॥

(Manusmrti 1 6)

Thereafter having created the great elements first and bringing the entire universe into existence, the Lord invested with unimpeded power capable of destroying darkness, the unrevealed Lord capable of voluntarily incarnating Himself, incarnated Himself at His will

Dwelling on the glory of God the Vedānta Philosophy observes— 'अक्षरमम्बरान्तधृते' (1 3.10) which means that indestructible Brahma who knows no decay sustains the entire universe extended upto the sky It further observes—'स च प्रशासनात्' (1 3 11) that is to say that *indestructible Supreme Person governs all*

The exponent of Gītā Lord Kṛsna who is designated as having a lotus in His navel observes thus about the bringing forth of the universe—

मम योनिर्महद्ब्रह्म तस्मिन् गर्भं दधाम्यहम्।
सम्भवः सर्वभूतानां ततो भवति भारत ॥

(Gītā XIV 3)

O descendent of Bharata, My primordial Nature known as the great Brahma, is the womb of all creatures, in that womb I place the seed of all life The creation of all beings follows from that union of Matter and Spirit

(2) **द्वितीयं त्वण्डसंस्थितम्**—The second form of Lord Visnu permeates the entire creation According to the quotation from the Vedas 'तत् सृष्ट्वा तदेवानुप्राविशत्' Lord Visnu in order to sustain the universe by creating it permeated it in His all pervasive aspect

(3) **तृतीयं सर्वभूतस्थम्**—The third aspect of Lord Visnu permeates through individual cosmic entities as well as the entire created beings This has clearly been explained in the Mantra occurring in the Upanisad which reads thus—'य आत्मनि तिष्ठन् आत्मनोऽन्तरो यमात्मा न वेद यस्यात्मा शरीरम्' Similar is the statement in the Gītā as well—'ईश्वर सर्वभूताना हृद्देशेऽर्जुन तिष्ठति' (XVIII 61)

The person who knows in reality these three aspects of Lord Visnu is released from the bondage of the matter (the cycle of birth and death)

After hearing the aforesaid three aspects of Lord Visnu, the devotee endowed with prudence and curiosity reflects thus—the first aspect of the Lord the indestructible, in other words who suffers no decay even at the time of final dissolution and the other two aspects viz , the Mahā Visnu and Visnu are comprehensively conjoined with Nature having three qualities—Sattva, Rajas and Tamas He who is born is sure to perish Even the scriptures clearly uphold the fact that at the time of ultimate dissolution the entire

creation along with Mahā Viṣnu are merged with the indestructible Supreme Person i e God who is beyond them The following lines may aptly be quoted here—

नारायणश्च शम्भुश्च संहत्य स्वगणान् बहून्।
शुद्धसत्त्वस्वरूपे च कृष्णे लीनश्च निर्गुणे॥
महाविष्णौ विलीनाश्च ते सर्वे क्षुद्रविष्णवः।
महाविष्णुः प्रकृत्यां च सा चैव परमात्मनि॥

(Brahmavaivarta Purāna, Prakrti khanda 54/93,95)

Nārāyana and Śambhu (the element of ego) dissolve into their being all the five Tanmātrās the five great elements the ten senses and mind etc., are—evolutes of Nature—and merge with the unmanifest Absolute Brahma In this process of Dissolution, the dissolution takes place in the following order—whereas the particles of all pervasive consciousness merge with Mahāvisnu, Mahā Visnu merges with the Nature and Nature rests in the Imperishable Supreme Soul who is beyond the Nature

In the Devībhāgavata Skandh 9 3 45 by giving the appelate Mahāvirāt to Mahāvisnu, He is spoken of as born of Prakrti as is evident from the following verses—

स्थूलात् स्थूलतमः सोऽपि नाम्ना देवो महाविराट्।
परमाणुर्यथा सूक्ष्मात् परः स्थूलात् तथाप्यसौ॥
तेजसा षोडशांशोऽयं कृष्णस्य परमात्मनः।
आधारः सर्वविश्वानां महाविष्णुश्च प्राकृतः॥

The Nature comprising the multitudinous universes lies at rest in the body of Śrī Mahāvisnu who is its inner soul On account of permeating through Nature He is said to be 'Prākṛta' Mahāvisnu possesses sixteenth part of the majesties—glory, power, elegance, knowledge and dispassion in comparison with Śrī Krsna Being the support of the entire universes, Mahāviṣnu by virtue of being the inner soul of Nature is said to be Prākrta

There is reference to this in the Devībhāgavata—

सर्वेषां परमात्मा च सच्चिदानन्दरूपधृक्।
ब्रह्मादयश्च तस्यांशास्तस्यांशश्च महाविराट्॥
तस्यांशश्च विराट् क्षुद्रः सैवेयं प्रकृतिः परा॥

× × ×

ब्रह्मादितृणपर्यन्तं सर्वं प्राकृतिकं भवेत्।
यद्यत् प्राकृतिकं सृष्टं सर्वं नश्वरमेव च॥

(9 8 79-82)

God who is Knowledge, Truth and Bliss combined is the Lord of all Mahāvirāt and gods like Brahmā and others are only a part of His Being, the higher Prakrti pervading through the universe is nothing but a part of the Oversoul (Śrī Krsna)

In this universe every thing—right from Brahmā to every blade of grass is all related to Prakrti and its three evolutes and every object which is Prākrta (born of the three modes of Nature) are all perishable and are subject to dissolution

Thus we come to the conclusion that Para Visnu or Śrī Krsna the ruler of the Goloka alone is the ultimate reality who transcends the three modes of Nature In this phenomenal world, being the universal Lord, He alone is spoken of as Visnu All these three aspects of the supreme Deity are imperishable and beyond the three Gunas as the Scriptures declare

सर्वे नित्याः शाश्वताश्च देहास्तस्य परात्मनः।
हानोपादानरहिता नैव प्रकृतिजाः क्वचित्॥

Now the question arises as to how could the imperishable Being be invested with attributes contrasting with his own In reply to this question it has been said in Patala 6 of the Māheśyara Tantra—

'अक्षरः परमात्मा च जाग्रत् स्वप्नं प्रपश्यति।'

That is imperishable God in His aspect of Truth, Knowledge and Bliss and invested with the threefold glories (of premordial abode called Goloka, absolution and aspect of Truth) carries on without any break the Divine sport called Vrajalīlā and Rāsalīlā During these Divine sports and maintaining the continuous and invariable state of consciousness with a singular mental attitude with the sixteenth part of Avyākrta Pāda in His dream the Nārāyana incarnates Himself as the aspect of Mahāvisnu and thereafter according to His resolve—'I am all by Myself I should assume innumerable forms' create innumerable—universes

Upanisad, the Purānas, the Tantra and the Samhitās all describe the dual aspect of Brahma viz.(1) the Absolute, having

the aspect of 'words' and (2) the Absolute It has simultaneously been asserted that he who attains perfection in the Absolute having the aspect of words (the Scriptural writings) perfectly knows theAbsolute through the sacred syllable 'Om'

In the XV chapter of Bhagavadgītā the Lord describes the three types of persons viz ,the perishable the imperishable and the Supreme person—'ऊर्ध्वमूलमध शाखम्' (Gītā 15.1) This tree in the form of this cosmos its roots extending upwards (has sprung from the primeval Being) extending downwards below the earth's surface That is the territory being the dreamland of the Imperishable the individual soul having forgotten its true knowledge of the Self assumes the illusory body, mind and wealth as true and devotes itself to the adoration of illusory gods of this illusory earth. Thus having described the perishable in the moot secret manner the Lord exhorts that it should be cut down with the formidable axe of dispassion

प्रणवाक्षरमात्रं हि तन्न जानीहि भो मुने ॥
अमात्रं शव्दरहितं स्वरव्यञ्जनवर्जितम् ।
विन्दुनादकलातीतं ब्रह्माक्षरमुदाहृतम् ॥

(Purāṇa-Saṃhitā 22 45)

Trying to expound the imperishable Absolute Śrī Śivajī says to Śrī Dvaipāyana Vyāsa—"O sage your, assumption that the sacred syllable Om (Omkāra) itself is the imperishable Absolute is not becoming a man like you who is the very incarnation of knowledge The imperishable Absolute is one who is devoid of vowels, consonants, words, expression, vowel mark, sound Kāla (short and long syllables contained in some verses) etc "

In the beginning of old creation having evolved from left half of Śrī Kṛsna's limbs, Lord Mahādevajī was Lord Krsna's first devotee into being Having emanated from the fraction of His Knowledge at the time of his birth soon after coming into existence started repeating the Divine Name 'Śrī 'Kṛṣna' from all his five mouths

प्रजपन् पञ्चवक्त्रेण ब्रह्मज्योतिः सनातनम् ।
सत्यस्वरूपं श्रीकृष्णं परमात्मानमीश्वरम् ॥

(Devībhāgavata IX 2 86)

Thereafter in the primeval days of old creation the devotee who in the prescribed manner initiated himself as the disciple of Śrī Krsna was Mahāvisnu e g

इत्युक्त्वा तस्य कर्णे स महामन्त्रं षडक्षरम् ।
त्रिःकृत्वश्च प्रजजाप वेदाङ्गप्रवरं परम् ॥
प्रणवादि चतुर्थ्यन्तं कृष्ण इत्यक्षरद्वयम् ।
वह्निजायान्तमिष्टं च सर्वविघ्नहरं परम् ॥

(Devībhāgavata IX 3.26-27)

Granting a number of boons to Śrī Mahāvisnu in the aforesaid manner Śrī Krsna thrice whispered into his ear the great Mantra (divine formula) consisting of six letters This excellent Mantra constitutes the predominant part of the Vedas The Mantra is initiated with the sacred syllable 'Om' The middle part consists of two lettered word 'Krsna' (when written in Devanāgarī script it has only two letters) derived to denote purpose And at the end Svāhā the wife of Agni (the fire god) to make it a sacred whole Thus 'ॐ कृष्णाय स्वाहा' is the final aspect of the divine formula through the recitation of this Mantra troubles are warded off

The sum and substance of the article is that the adoration of Para Visnu (the Imperishable Śrī Krsṇa dwelling in this supreme abode 'Goloka') leads to the path of detachment namely the bright path and the adoration of the perishable leads one to the path of action with interested motive—namely the dark path

That is why dealing with the outcome of the two types of adoration—of the perishable and the imperishable in the style of the Upanisads the Lord says in the Gītā—

शुक्लकृष्णे गती ह्येते जगतः शाश्वते मते ।
एकया यात्यनावृत्तिमन्ययावर्तते पुनः ॥

(Gītā VIII 26)

From the very beginning of creation two different courses have been conceived of as a result of two objects of adoration—(1) the bright course and (2) the dark course Out of these two the embodied soul proceeding along the bright course never returns to this mortal world of birth and death whereas one proceeding along the dark course returns to this mortal world.

Exhorting his mother Devahūti on the subject of the Yoga of Devotion, Lord Kapila said—Deprived of my service, the devotees do not accept any kind of salvation (even when voluntarily offered)

सालोक्यसार्ष्टिसामीप्यसारूप्यैकत्वमप्युत ।
दीयमानं न गृह्णन्ति विना मत्सेवनं जनाः ॥

(Bhāgavata III 29.13)

Thus we come to the conclusion that having known the three aspects of Lord Visnu and proceeding on the bright path the man is extricated from the bondage of Prakṛti i.e the coils of birth and death

—Adapted from 'Kalyana'



The early Aryan worshippers of the Sun and the Moon soon began to look beyond these objects of veneration to the creator of these objects. They called this creator Śakti or power However, they could not rest satisfied with the notion of a boundless power evolving everything of itself They proceeded on to the conception of a Being who controlled and regulated his Śakti power This supreme Being they name Viṣṇu

—God Number

अहो वत श्वपचोऽतो गरीयान् यज्जिह्वाग्रे वर्तते नाम तुभ्यम् ।
तेपुस्तपस्ते जुहुवः सस्नुरार्या ब्रह्मानूचुर्नाम गृणन्ति ये ते ॥

O God, one who bears Thy Name on the tip of his tongue is worthy of reverence even though he may be a Cāṇḍāla by birth because it is such people who have rightly practised austerities, it is they who have really offered oblations to the fire, they who have truly taken a plunge into the sacred rivers, they, again, who are Āryas, that is bear good conduct, and it is they who have properly studied the Vedas, because Thy Name is constantly on their lips

—Bhāgavata (III 33 7)



A Hymn: Praying for Protection

—Brahmananda

O Almighty, the Absolute Truth, Knowledge and Bliss,
Of whose Illusion is projected this wonderful cosmos,
Who is ever kind and compassionate to His devotees,
I bow and salute, Thee, O supreme Lord of Universe

Frail this frame ever preyed upon by diseases severe,
Day by day this heart is scorched by lust and passion,
Counting days death cometh dancing ever nearer and nearer,
So, O friend of the afflicted, may Thou give protection

This body is dissoluble subjct to continuous decay,
This heart is weary, ever inclined to the objects of senses,
The intellect finds delight in the senses, not in the Self,
I take refuge in Thee, O dear friend of the distressed

Like water in earthen jar the life's force ever ebbs,
The beauty to youth like the lightning doth vanish,
Tottering walks the old-age like a decrepit lioness,
O friend of the afflicted, Thy protection I beseech

I frittered away more than what I could conserve,
Lustful desires overpowered my faculty of restraint,
Can I tell my mind when I would be at death throe,
So, I take refuge in Thee, O friend of the afflicted

Never had I burnt my body in any austere pratice,
Never had I oblated my speech in the fire of truth,
Indulging ever in untruth never curbed my mind,
O friend of the distressed, in Thee I take refuge

My mind has remained dazed, stunned and stupid,
My eyes cannot behold Thy universal cosmic form,
My speech is bereft of humbleness and chastity,
O friend of the distressed, may Thou give me protection

Goodness has left me driven by passion and ignorance,
In a state like that good work is beyond my conception,
Whatever peace I get that's from my habitual performance,
So, O friend of the distressed, I seek Thy protection

Even for a moment with devotion I had not worshipped,
Thy sacred mystic formula I had no desire to repeat,
I had not cogitated Thy lotus feet in my heart,
O friend of the distressed, in Thee refuge I seek.

I had no sacrifice in oblation, in gift or in mercy,
Nor Had I discriminatory knowledge as fruit of my practice,
Without having proper knowledge, liberation is merely a fantasy,
O friend of the distressed, for refuge in Thee I beseech

—Translated by Jaypal Jee



Main Features of Vaiṣṇavism

—Brahmalina Devarahava Baba

Man possesses ardent feeling of love—Only the proper use of it is needed. All the religious preceptors of every country make effort towards this feeling in the right direction In Vaisnava religious mould, efforts have been made to make this feeling munificent and pervasive That is why the common feature of Vaisnavism is as follows The religion through which the feelings of man are purified, by which truth, non violence, love is installed in his heart and by which, kindness, affection, forbearance, largeheartedness and gentleness towards all creatures are motivated—that is Vaisnavism Hindus, Muslims, Sikhas, Christians, Theists and Atheists—people belonging to all classes sit under the banner of this religion with equal feeling. Casting aside the bondages of caste and creed, breaking off social discriminations and bringing human feelings of the world on one common platform—This Vaisnava Religion is the outcome of the natural tendency of the man The history of India is a living proof of this fact that innumerable foreigners, accepting this religion, have experienced a feeling of honour and pride Hūna, Āndhra, Pulinda, Pulkasa, Yavana, Khasa, and people belonging to such other castes and creeds have been considered to be holy and respectable under the banner of this religion

किरातहूणान्ध्रपुलिन्दपुल्कसा आभीरकङ्का यवनाः खसादयः ।
येऽन्ये च पापा यदपाश्रयाश्रयाः शुध्यन्ति तस्मै प्रभविष्णवे नमः ॥

(Śrīmad Bhāgavata II 4,18)

The Kirātas, the Hūnas, the Āndhras, the Pulindas, the Pulkasas, Ābhīras, the Kankas, the Yavanas, the Khasas and other sinful races, no less than others of sinful conduct, are purged of their sins even by taking refuge in those who depend on Him To that all powerful Lord we offer own greetings

'वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्' is the theme of this religion, 'अहिंसा' (non violence) is its base, Godmindedness in the midst of the world is its discipline and love towards all creatures is its sweet fruit This religion is full of activity and not otherwise—

नारायणपरो धर्मः पुनरावृत्तिदुर्लभः ।
प्रवृत्तिलक्षणश्चैव धर्मो नारायणात्मकः ॥

In the Śānti Parva of Mahābhārata Vaisnava Religion and Indian culture have been treated almost as identical If one ponders deeply, one will realise that Vaisnavism includes all the features (characteristics) of the world culture In Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā also, the essence of this religion is described The realization of the Divine Love is the chief aim of the devotion of all the saints and all the Vaisnva scholars However great differences outwardly there may be among different sects but there is not much difference in their basic principles (Philosophies) All Vasnvite sects consider the God as possessing attributes and shapes, and in the base of this God, the formless and attributeless Brahma remains God, by nature, is the Master, All-pervading and controller while Jīva, by nature, is a slave, atom and disciple Self action is the basis of the purification of mind and the cause of knowledge It is through devotion alone that the Almighty can be realized—the only way to realize devotion is the love of God By surrender to God alone, the love of God and the mercy of God can be achieved



Lord Śrī Viṣṇu

—K Raghupathi Rao

Ācārya Śrī Madhva has placed all the devotees of Lord Śrī Visnu in deep debt of gratitude, by presenting to them, the supreme position which Visnu occupies as per the Vaidika lore In the philosophical classification of entities, Madhva takes that stand that Visnu is unique and is a category by Himself[1] He alone is absolutely independent, while all others fall into the category of dependents He has also pointed out that the Vedas and the Epics glorify Visnu, in the beginning, in the middle and in the end as well[2]

Viṣṇu is the only Lord of the Universe—

The Brahmasūtras of Bhagavān Vedavyāsa make it clear that He alone is Brahma from whom this universe has emanated In the scrutiny of such reference Visnu alone satisfies the requirement of the word Brahma Now it is not a partiality for Visnu, but it is the shortcomings of others that have made them to resort to protect them

Vāyu is the Chief Executer of Viṣṇu's Will—

Ācārya Śrī Madhva has shown that Vāyu is the chosen instrument of the Lord, that he serves Him faithfully in all his three manifestations[3] As Hanumān he served Lord Śrī Rāma, as Bhīma, he served Lord Śrī Krsna and as Ānanda Tīrtha, he served Lord Śrī Vedavyāsa And in all three manifestations he had kept for himself the maxim[4] of working only to please the Lord So we have before us such an exemplary character to lead us

When Ācārya Śrī Madhva came on the philosophical scene of India, three tenets have sapped the energies of the nation They are[5a] This universe is illusion or unreal[5b] The Lord is without any attributes and[5c] there is no difference between individual souls So a clear licence was given to immorality, since,

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1 svatantramasvatantram ca dvividham tattvamisyate

2 vede rāmāyane caiva purāne bhārate tathā
ādau ante ca madhye ca visnuh sarvatra gīyate

3 srī rāmam hanumat sevyam śrī krsnambhīma sevitam
srī vyāsam srīmadānandatīrtha saṁsevitam bhaje

4 krto' yam prīyatām tena paramātmā ramāpatih

5 (a) viśvam mithyā (5b) vibhuḥ agunavān, (5c) ātmanām nāsti bhedah

if you were no different from Brahma, you can do no wrong. And since there is no second real principle in the universe, you cannot commit sin. This has resulted in each one doing what was convenient to one, with utter disregard for the scriptural injunctions.

Ācārya Śrī Madhva brought home to the devotees of Lord Śrī Viṣṇu, that they have a duty to lead a responsible life, here, since it is a unique opportunity offered by the Lord, to work out one's liberation. And brought home too, that irrespective of whom one may try to cheat, there is no question of cheating Viṣṇu, since He is in us and He is around us, everywhere, all the time This awareness in one applies, the required brake on licentious living. Saint Śrī Vādirāja, one of the saints of the Madhva order, takes up the case of Lord presenting himself as Vāmana and then growing to occupy all places as Trivikrama, when the nail of His left toe, perforated the outer periphery of Brahmānda and water started pouring in, Brahmadeva collected this water and offered arghya to the Lord Śiva bore this water on his head to tell all devotees that the water associated with the feet of the Lord is most sacred And those waters were given the name of Gangā-ganges

Now it is clear for all reasonable people as to what is the hierarchy in the Cosmos And hence Madhva tells his devotees that remembrance of the very name of that Lord Viṣṇu, gives all cover to His devotees and forms the basic injunction for them to practice[6] And Madhva promises that if only, one could stick to this practice of chanting the glorious name of the Lord, that itself is the greatest wealth one could possess and forgetfulness forms the greatest danger one would have to face in life[7] May the devotees of Lord Śrī Visnu take this message clearly, live a purposeful life and work for the end of their bondage through His Grace

—Śrī Kṛṣṇārpaṇamastu.



6 smartavyah satatam visnuh vismartavyo na jātu cit
sarve vidhinisedhāh syuh etayoreva kinkarāh

7 vipado naiva vipadah sampado naiva sampadah
vipadvismaranam visnoh sampat tasyaiva samsmrtih

Twenty-four Incarnations of Bhagavān Śrī Viṣṇu

1. Śrī Sanaka and others—

In the beginning of the creation Brahmā, the Pitāmaha of the worlds practised austerities with the desire to create the worlds Being pleased with the incessant penances of the creator, the Lord who is the substratum of all, assumed the name 'sana' signifying 'tapa' or penance and took the incarnations as the four perpetual celibate sages—Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanātana and Sanatkumāra These sages were, since the moment of their manifestation, endowed eternally with superhuman faculties and were perpetually detached With these perpetual celibate sages Brahmā's desire for propagating the creation could not be accomplished

The sages Sanaka etc., always remain as boys of five years of age They are the formost among the masters of Yoga, skilled in the philosophy of Sānkhya, teachers of Dharmaśāstras and have instituted the doctrine of liberation They have taught Nārada the Śrīmadbhāgavata

Replying to the question of the sages pertaining to the knowledge of Truth, Bhagavān Sanatkumāra exhorts in the following words

'There is no eye like knowledge, no penance like truth There is no misery like attachment and no pleasure like Renunciation Refraining from sinful acts, constant practice of meritorious deeds, association with great men and observance of noble conduct—this is the means for achieving the greatest happiness'

Endless salutations be to the pious lotus-like feet of the four Kumāras, who are the real well-wishers of the living beings.

2. Bhagavān Varāha:—

"O Lord, the Sruk (laddle) is your nostrils, Sāma songs are your deep-sounding voice Prāgvamśa (or the place of the sacrificer) is your body and the entire sattra (soma-sacrifice) is the joints of limbs O God, righteousness such as *ista* (i.e sacrifice) and *Pūrta* (i e getting wells, ponds and lakes dug out, getting trees planted, doing other deeds of help and charity) are your eyes O Lord of immutable form, be pleased "

"How can I pull out the earth immersed in unfathomable waters?" So brooded the four-faced Brahmā, not knowing what to do He then decided. "This work should be accomplished by the same Śrī Hari whose mere inclination has brought forth me."

As soon as he remembered the All-pervasive, the highest Lord of all the worlds, a young issue of boar (Varāha) just of the size of the thumb and white in colour spontaneously appeared from the nostrils of lotus-born Brahmā While the Creator was observing it all amazed, it grew in a moment into the size of a gigantic elephant

"There is no doubt that the Lord possessed of the form of sacrifice is deluding us," thus decided venerable Brahmā after having consulted with Svāyambhūva Manu and then he remarked with conviction "This is indeed the auspicious Varāha-form of the Lord composed of the Vedas and sacrifices "

Meanwhile the boar form of Bhagavān assumed a shape as huge as mountain The horrible roarings of Bhagavān in sacrifice-form pervaded the four quarters Growling and roaring he began to play like an elephant in rut The sages at that moment were engaged in praising the Lord to please him The boar form of Lord was very wonderful and Divine

3. The Divine Sage Nārada—

The auspicious sage Nārada is the mental incarnation of Śrī Bhagavān The actions of the all-knowing and all-seeing Nārada who carries a Vīnā in his hands, proceed exactly in accordance with the desires and designs of the benevolent Lord Śrīmadbhāgavata says

In the creation of seers He appeared in his third incarnation as

the sage Nārada and preached Sātvatatantra (known as the Nārada-Pañcarātra), which points out the way of release from the bonds of Karma through the Karma or action

4. Bhagavān Nara-Nārāyaṇa—

"That (Supreme soul) is realized through Jñāna-Yoga or contemplation for true knowledge) Both of us have come forth from Him Having understood this we worship that eternal Supreme Soul "

"Those who always remember Him and take shelter in Him with unswerving mind are benefited with the great success in entering His form "

—*Nara-Nārāyana*

In the beginning of creation Bhagavān Vāsudeva himself became manifested in two shapes from the co-existing form of Dharma They wore matted hair on their heads They had the marks of goose (Hamsa) in their palms, of disc (cakra) in the feet and of Śrīvatsa on thier chests Their arms were long, sonorous voice like that of the clouds, charming faces, broad foreheads, beautifully curved eye-brows, shapely chins and nostrils Their complete dress was those of ascetics They were possessed of brilliance and similar in appearance, complexion and nature The names of those propitious ascetics were Nara and Nārāyana

5. Bhagavān Kapil—

It was the Svāyambhuva Manvantara of the first Pādmakalpa The four-faced Pitāmaha of the worlds was seized with the anxiety for the propagation of the creation He prompted Svāyambhuva Manu to marry Śatarūpā, and after that the Creator ordered his mind-born son the great sage Kardama to procreate Following the command of Father, Maharṣi Kardama engaged himself in austerities at the holy place named Bindusāra. Having concentrated his mental faculties and having attained the state of Samādhi which is higher than Dhāraṇā and Dhyāna, he was completely enraptured with the perception of the all alluring grandeur of Śrī Hari, who holds in his hands Śankha (conch-shell), Cakra (disc), Gadā (mace) and Padma (lotus). He did not have the slightest awareness of the external world In this

state he had passed ten thousand years when the most—cherished image, which had possessed his contemplation abruptly disappeared from the mind of that great sage Bewildered in mind opened his eyes and was then extremely delighted and contented. In front of Maharsi Kardama there stood the same image of his contemplation, the ultimate object of his yoga practices, Śrī Hari, of dark complexion like the blue lotus-leaf and decked with yellow garments was standing before his eyes with a charming smile on his face. The Maharsi fell prostrate like a stick on the feet of the Lord and with folded hands and heart filled with devotion he began to praise him with these sweet words

"O Lord! You are the Kalpa tree Your feet fulfil all the desires My heart is tarnished with sensuous desires I too have come to the refuge of your feet with the desire of marrying a young woman possessing a disposition agreeable to me, able to assist me in the discharge of household duties and endowed with a noble conduct O Master, although you are inactive by nature, yet through your powers (māyā) you cause the activities of the entire universe to go on and you shower the objects of desire upon those who turn to you worshipping even in small measures "

"O Muni, the desire with which you have been worshipping me for a long time will definitely be fulfilled " So said Śrī Hari who is the dearest treasure of the devotees, to the sage Kardama putting on a smile Svāyambhuva Manu, the illustrious emperor of the earth consisting of seven *dvīpas* is ruling it living in Brahmāvarta On the day after tomorrow he will arrive here along with his noble wife Śatarūpā and his daughter Devahūti who is beautiful young and possessed of noble qualities and conduct That princess is fit for you by all means The emperor Svāyambhuva Manu will offer her to you in accordance with the prescribed rites Nine daughters will be born of that illustrious and ideal lady These daughters after being married to the sages Marīci and others will help the Creator in his cherished object of propagation After this the omnipotent Lord who restrains all being inherent in them and who is the ocean of mercy, concluded with these words

'Being pure in mind due to the performance of the duties



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commanded by me and having surrendered to me the fruits of all actions you will realize me. O Great sage! I, too, will be born in the form of a Śakti of my Part (aṁśakalā) from your wife Devahūti through your seed'

That auspicious day dawned The water of the rivers and ponds became quite transparent Sweet gentle and fragrant winds blew All the quarters were cheerful, All over the earth and the sky, divine bliss pervaded. Gods rained flowers. The Lord Nārāyana incarnated himself from the womb of Blessed Devahūti

Brahmā said to Devahūti, "With golden hair, lotus, like eyes and lotus feet whose soles bear the mark of a lotus, it is Lord Visnu who has been born of you O Devahūti to tear up the roots of Karma (in the form of latent desires) through the instrumentality of spiritual wisdom and realisation having cut the knot of ignorance and misapprehension He will roam about the earth He will be the Lord of the Siddhas held in great esteem by the teachers of Sāṅkhya system of philosophy He will be known all over the world by the name of Kapila and will spread your fame "

—*Śrīmad Bhāgavata*

6. Bhagavān Śrī Dattātreya—

He who having dispelled the darkness of ignorance illuminates the heart with the light of knowledge, is a 'Guru' or teacher Sends out ignorance (गिरति अज्ञानम्) or 'proclaims knowledge' (गृणाति ज्ञानम्) is the etymology of the word 'Guru' Usually Bhagavān takes up incarnations with the purpose of eradicating the ignornace of the human beings and filling their minds with the light of knowledge. Generally speaking the incarnation serves many purposes, but the dispelling away the darkness of ignorance from the minds of embodied souls is nevertheless its ultimate aim So long as there is the existence of living beings in this world the continuity of this process is inevitable With this thought Bhagavān Śrī Visnu took up the incarnation of Śrī Dattātreya the teacher par excellence

Just as numerous streams rush out from a lake overflowing with water, similarly the incarnations of Bhagavān take place for the welfare of beings Of these endless incarnations, twenty-four have been referred to by the author of the Śrīmad Bhāgavata Of

those twenty-four incarnations, that of Siddharāja Bhagavān is reckoned as the sixth This incarnation has no period of termination, and therefore it is designated as 'avināśī' or endless Since He is the lord of all Siddhas, i e inspired sages of superhuman powers, he is referred to as Siddharāja also He protected the gods by means of his uncommon skill in Yoga and hence he is called as Devadeveśvara (the ruler of the greatest among the gods)

7. Bhagavān Yajña (Sacrifice):—

It was Svāyambhuva Manvantara The blessed Ākūti was born of Śatarūpā, the meritorious wife of Svāyambhuva Manu She became the wife of Ruci Prajapati. From this Ākūti the Primeval Man (Ādipurusa) Śrī Bhagavān incarnated Himself He was renowned by the name 'Yajña' (sacrifice) It was this Great Lord who promulgated sacrifice which came to be known by his name 'Yajña' By him the powers of the gods increased and through the powers of the gods the entire creation was filled with strength.

8. Bhagavān Ṛṣabhadeva—

The emperor Nābhi, who was the son of Āgnīdhra, had no progeny He, therefore, undertook the performance of sacrifice accompanied by his noble wife Merudevī, with the desire for a son

The priests, pure in mind through austerities, eulogized Yajña-Puruṣa (the Sacrifice in the form of Man) with the mantras of Veda, whereupon there appeared the Four-armed Nārāyana, the great saviour of the Brāhmanas, holding Śankha, Cakra, Gadā and Padma in his hands His limbs were wonderfully brilliant Having seen the propitious Lord, who was the endless ocean of nectar-like beauty, the king, the queen and the priests were filled with delight All bowed down with great devotion and reverence on the lotus-like feet of Lord, worshipped him with *arghya* offerings and prayed to him

'O Lord ! The noble king Nābhi and his wife Merudevī cherish a son like you,' thus the priests expressed the desire after having praised the Lord

'O sages ! You have asked for a boon very difficult to grant', said

Śrī Bhagavān with a smile, "I am unmatched. Therefore just to honour your words I myself shall enter into an incarnation in the house of Nābhi, since I am like myself and there is nobody like me."

Having said so Bhagavān disappeared and after a few days the Supreme Soul came into this world from the womb of Merudevī, the most blessed wife of Mahārāja Nābhi.

The limbs of Nābhi's son bore the marks of Viṣṇu such as Vajra, Ankuśa. Having observed the handsome well-built physique, fame, brilliance, strength, glory, valiance, bravery and other qualities of his son, Mahārāja Nābhi gave him the name Ṛṣabha (the excellent one).

9. The First King Pṛthu—

In the lineage of Svāyambhuva Manu, Anga Prajāpati was married with Sunīthā the mind-born daughter of Mṛtyu. He had a son named Vena. Vena followed the habits and temperaments of his mother's father. He being very arrogant, unrighteous, violent by nature began to torture the subjects under the influence of passion and envy. The people suffered immensely due to his evil deeds. As soon as he was anointed as a king by the great sages, he declared "I am the Lord Yajñapurusa. Who else can be the enjoyer and lord of sacrifices besides me? Therefore nobody should ever perform sacrifice, or give away gifts or offer oblations."

"Kill this sinful one" cried the great sages having heard such censure of the Supreme Lord Hari and they killed him with kuśa grass sanctified by mantras.

The mother Sunīthā preserved the dead body of her son for some days. On the other side there being no king, lawlessness prevailed everywhere in the kingdom through the robbers and plunderers. Seeing this helpless situation the sages began to churn the right thigh of Vena chanting holy mantras. From his thigh there appeared a man with complexion as dark as the charred post, quite short statured and small-faced. Quite perplexed he asked the sages "What should I do?" "Niṣīda" (Sit down)", they replied. Hence he came to be known as Niṣāda. Through that

exit in the form of that Nisāda, Vena's entire sins flowed out.

After this the Brāhmanas churned the arms of that sonless king Vena and a couple of man and woman issued forth

"This man is born of the all-succouring power (kalā) of Visnu and this woman is a manifestation of his powers known as the goddess Laksmī "

"On acount of spreading (prathana) of his noble fame, this illustrious man will be known as the emperor Prthu" So forbade the sages and they furhter declared "This most beautiful damsel, possessed of all auspicious marks as she is, will receive the name 'Arci' She will be the wife of emperor Prthu" Seeing the marks of disc (cakra) in the right hand and that of lotus in the feet, the sages announced "The part (amśa) of Śrī Hari Himself has come down as incarnation in the form of Prthu and the goddess Lakṣmī, the eternal spouse of the Lord has descended on earth as Arci

10. Bhagavān Matsya (Fish)—

"When the reverend Brahmā was lying asleep in the oceans of the annihilation of all (pralaya), the demon Hayagrīva stole away the Vedas issuing out of his mouths and entered into Pātāla, i e the lowest world Bhagavān killed him and returned the Vedas to Brahmā and preached the true nature of Brahmā to the noble king Satyavrata and the seven sages I bow to Bhagavān who out of play manifested Himself as Matsya and is the ultimate cause of the world

11. Bhagavān Kūrma (Tortoise)—

At the time when the Lord assumed the form of a tortoise and the colossal Mandara mountain was moving, like a churning-stick on his back, the itching caused by the points of the rocks gave a bit of pleasure to the Lord He felt drowsiness and his breathings increased The effects of the beatings of his breathings persists even today in the water of the ocean Even today the ocean continues rising and receding day and night It could not get rest till now Those most powerful breathings of Bhagavān may protect you all For bringing out Ambrosia thus by Lord Visnu's Divine power only the ocean was churned on the back of Lord Visnu in the form of tortoise

12. Bhagavān Dhanvantari—

With the purpose of establishing the welfare of the creatures and for the eradication of the miseries brought by the old age and the diseases Bhagavān Śrī Viṣṇu himself took the incarnation as Dhanvantari on the thirteenth day of the dark fortnight in the month of Kārttika Accordingly those who love the Āyurveda and are the devotees of Bhagavān Dhanvantari celebrate on this day his birth anniversary worshipping him as the deity of health

13. Śrī Mohinī—

The entire creation is an illusion (māyā) created by Māyāpati All beings overpowered by Kāma (lust) are enamoured of that illusive form of Lord Viṣṇu, all are enchanted with it Amṛta or ambrosia, which bestows immortality is impossible to acquire in the life and conduct as an Asura That is only possible by taking refuge in the feet of the merciful God.

"Evil men never succeed in attaining the lotus-like feet of Bhagavān Those feet are accessible only to a man possessed of the feelings of devotion For this reason Bhagavān assumed the illusive form of a woman, deluded the Demons (Daityas), and gave away the drink of ambrosia to the gods, who had sought shelter at his feet It is not only about the gods but also anybody who takes refuge in his feet finds his desires fulfilled by Him I bow on the lotus-like feet of that Lord

14. Bhagavān Nṛsiṁha—

This is an event of the Kṛtayuga Once Sanaka and other mind-born sons of Brahmā, who always remain as five year old children, went to Vaikunthaloka They desired to see Bhagavān Visnu, but Jaya and Vijaya, the two door keepers took them for children and prohibited their entry At this those seers were infuriated and pronounced curse on them saying 'Your intellect is overpowered by Tamas quality and therefore you will become Asuras After three births you will regain this place By the power of the curse of the Ṛsis, those two were born from Diti as Hiranyakaśipu and Hiranyākṣa Hiranyākṣa was killed by Bhagavān in the incarnation of Varāha (Boar) Aggrieved by the murder of his brother Hiranyakaśipu ordered the Daityas and

Dānavas to indulge in violence and oppression and himself moved to the mountain Mandara. The fire of revenge was enflamed in his heart and with a view to taking vengeance on Visnu he harnessed himself in the performance of terrific penances

When the three worlds sufferred great harassment and torture and the gods were greatly disturbed, they assemled and went together to Brahmā for shelter They besought him to forbid Hiranyakaśipu from penances Ascending on the Hamsa (i e his vehicle, the goose) Brahmā arrived at the place where Hiraṇyakaśipu sat in penances The white ants had eaten his body His life only lingered among the skelton and he appeared like an ant-hill Brahmā sprinkled water from his water-pot (kamandalu) Hiranyakaśipu emerged from it in his actual form Brahmā then said to him "My son ! nobody has practised so terrific penances till now, nor anybody will be able to do so in future Now ask for your cherished boon " Having heard this Hiraṇyakaśipu replied "O Lord ! If you are willing to grant a boon of my choice, please grant this boon that I may not be killed either by a man or by an animal, either by a living being or by any insentient object, either by a deity or by Daitya or Nāga etc I may not be killed inside a house or outside, either in the day or at night I may not be killed by any other creature besides those created by you or by any weapon I may not be killed either on the earth or in the sky Nobody may resist me in battle May I become the one supreme ruler of the creatures May I have such greatness as you have among the gods. Please grant me imperishable powers like those of ascetics and Yogī

Pleased with his penances as he was, Brahmā granted him the boon asked by him and disappeared Hiranyakaśipu returned to his capital. His wife Kayādhu came back to the palace from the hermitage of Nārada. From her Prahlāda, the best among the devotees of Bhagavān, was born Hiranyakaśipu had four sons Prahlāda was the youngest of them and hence the dearest one He called for his teacher's sons Sanda and Amarka and entrusted Prahlāda in their charge for his education and training Prahlāda

started his studies in the teacher's house Since he had a very sharp intellect, he picked up the knowledge imparted by the teachers in no time Along with that his devotion in God also increased He used to preach devotion in God even to the Asura children One day Hiranyakaśipu placed the child Prahlāda in his lap and asked him caressing "My son ! tell me about the best thing that you have read in your books " At this Prahlāda spoke highly in favour of the devotion to Lord Visnu As soon as Hiraṇyakaśipu heard this he became enraged, lifted up Prahlāda from his lap and dashed him against the ground He then ordered the Asuras to kill him And Asuras hurled various weapons on Prahlāda to do away with him, but all of them failed He was made to be trampled by elephants caused to be bitten by snakes, was thrown down from the peak of the mountain. Many deceitful charms were used on him by Sambarāsura He was even closed in a cell, made to drink poison, was deprived of food, and was thrown at places frozen with cold or burning hot with fire and was even thrown in sea He was left in a storm and was crushed under the heap of massive rocks But he was not even slightly hurt by any method

One day having heard the complaint of the teacher's sons, Hiranyakaśipu sent for Prahlāda He began to threaten and terrify him in many ways and then he said O wretched one ! Where is your God on whose strength you are bragging garrulously ? If he is everywhere, why is he not visible in this pillar ?" Prahlāda then replied "For me He is visible even in this pillar " On this Hiranyakaśipu could not restrain his anger He took the sword in his hand, jumped from the throne and forcefully hit that pillar with his fist A great thundering sound issued forth from that pillar, as if the cosmos was broken asunder Having heard that great noise Hiranyakaśipu looked around frightfully for its source but be could not see anybody inside the court-hall Meanwhile an unusually superhuman phenomenon appeared there

"At that time in order to prove the veracity of the words uttered by his worshipper Prahlāda and to exhibit his

pervasiveness in all objects, Bhagavān appeared assuming a miraculous form in the midst of the court-hall from the same pillar That form was wholly neither that of a lion nor that of a man

After that Hiranyakaśipu attacked Lord Nrsimha (man-lion form of God) roaring fiercely and holding a mace in his hand Bhagavān too, indulged in a game of battle for some time Lastly he laughed terribly The eyes of Hiraṇyakaśipu closed to hear this Bhagavān swiftly grasped him just as a snake seizes a rat Then he carried him to the gate of the court-hall, put him on his thighs and tore asunder his heart with his nails quite playfully.

Prahlāda eulogises Lord Nrsimha (Incarnation of Viṣṇu)— O Infinite one, whatever is revealed by mind or speech is no other than you Every thing is you and you alone. Neither these three modes of Prakrti viz (Sattva, Rajas and Tamas) nor all the twenty four categories of Prakrti (from mahattattva to sense objects) are able to know you in truth Thinking thus men of good sense desist from the study of the Vedas and other scriptures and devote themselves exclusively to your meditation Therefore can a man develop devotion to you or reach the goal of ascetics of the highest order except through the whole hearted service to you ?

Lord Blessed Prahlāda—

O long lived one I am difficult perception and having beheld me once, a living being has no longer any reason to grieve It is for this reason alone that enlightened and pious souls who are highly fortunate and desirous of blessedness propitiate me, the Lord of all boons with all their being

15. Bhagavān Vāmana—

It happenned in very old times Gods and Asuras fought together The gods were vanquished Asuras established their rule on the heaven

Seeing Bali, the king of the Daityas ruling over the heaven, Indra, the king among the gods visited his mother's hermitage situated on the peak of the mountain Sumeru There all the gods who were defeated by the Dānavas, proceeded near the mother Aditi and bowed on her feet They told about their miserable

plight to her. On the command of mother Aditi, Indra and other gods went to the great ascetic Kaśyapa, the son of Marīci, bowed on his feet and said with folded hands "Father! Bali, the powerful king of the Daityas,has become invincible for us in the battle Therefore please find out some way which might be auspicious and invigorating for us gods

Having heard about the troubles of his sons, Kaśyapa took the gods with him and went to the highest and the most celebrated court of Brahmā. Having entered the Brahmā's court which fulfils all the desires, Kaśyapa, the greatest among the righteous sages, his son Indra, who is the king of the gods and all other deities saw Brahmā sitting on a lotus-seat and they all saluted him along with the Brahmarsis bowing their heads on His feet As soon as they touched the feet of Brahmā they were all absolved of sins Seeing all the gods assembled before him along with Kaśyapa Brahmā the supreme ruler told them to practise severe penances on the northern shore of Ksīrasāgara situated in the north

The gods accepted the order of Pitāmaha, saluted him bowing down their heads and started their journey towards north in order to reach Śvetadvīpa In a short time, they arrived at the shore of the sea called Ksīra Sāgara, the lord of rivers From there they crossed over the seven seas, the mountains with the forests and many holy rivers Finally they reached the last point of the earth There was only darkness all around Having reached there Maharsi Kaśyapa resorted to a place free from thorns etc and sat down in the posture called Vīrāsana following the Brahmacarya (the life of a Celibate ascetic) and restraining speech He took the initiation for a divine penance which was to continue for one thousand years, since he had to propitiate Bhagavān Nārāyana, who possesses a thousand eyes and is the lord over yoga Similarly all the gods engaged themselves in penances After this just in order to please Nārāyana, the great sage Kaśyapa praised Him with the hymn called 'paramastava', preached in the Vedas

Then after hearing the praises done by Kaśyapa, the son of Marīci, Bhagavān Nārāyana was pleased He said in his deep-sounding voice. "O gods! May you be prosperous You may

ask for any boon of your choice I wish to grant a boon to you all "

Kaśyapa said "O the greatest of the gods ! If you are pleased with us then with the unanimous opinion of all present here I beg you for this boon that you yourself may kindly be born from Aditi's womb as the younger brother of Indra On the other side, too, Aditi the mother of gods, who was also cherishing a boon, prayed to Bhagavān, the bestower of boons, for a son Along with this all the deities together submitted to God "O the Great Lord May you always be our brother, protector, bestower and refuge"

Bhagavān Visnu said to the gods "O gods, all of your enemies combined together cannot stand in fornt of Me even for a while I shall kill all the Asuras who are now eating first in the sacrifice, and shall make all the deities eaters of oblations (havyāśī) and the forefathers, eaters of the offerings fit for the manes (kavyāśī) O great deities, please go back by the way you have come here "

After the majestic Visnu had said so, all those gods, who were led by Kaśyapa and Aditi worshipped Bhagavān Visnu, paid obeisance to Him and set out for the hermitage of Kaśyapa Having reached the hermitage they persuaded Aditi for undertaking great penances At that time Aditi felt much despair to see the insult of the great sages by the Daityas She began to think "My begotting sons have proved futile" She, therefore, restrained her senses and dedicated herself in praying to Bhagavān Visnu the affectionate protector of those who go to Him for shelter At that time air was the only means of sustenance for her She engaged herself in praising the Lord.

Pleased with the prayers of Aditi, Bhagavān Viṣnu appeared in front of Aditi remaining invisible for other creatures and said

"O blessed lady ! I know the desire of your heart Whatever boons you wish to obtain, all of them will be granted to you through my kindness A visit to me never goes in vain "

Time passed away swiftly At last in the tenth month the moment of the Bhagavan's manifestation approached At that moment Moon was in Śravana naksatra It was the twelfth day of the White fortnight in the month of Bhādrapada The *muhūrta* named Abhijit was in progress All the naksatras and stars were

heralding fortune At such an auspicious moment Bhagavān appeared in front of Aditi His glorious form was extra-mundane.

"Bhagavān possessed four arms, which were holding Śankha, Cakra, Gadā and Padma (i e the conch-shell, disc, mace and the lotus respectively) He was putting on yellow clothes (Pītāmbara) His eyes were large and beautiful like the lotus flowers His body possessed lustrous black complexion The beauty of the lotus-like face was exceedingly enhanced with the ear-ornaments (kundala) built in the shape of a crocodile (makara) His chest bore the mark of Śrīvatsa, the hands bore bracelets and the arms were adorned with armlets He had crown on His head, strings of waist-band were shining in his waist and lovely anklets were quite charming in His feet Around his neck there hung a wreath of flowers taken from the forest (vanamālā), on which clusters of black-bees were hovering His neck was adorned with the jewel named Kaustubha He was dispelling away the darkness of Kaśyapa's house with his lustre

16. Bhagavān Hayagrīva—

When the earth was lost in the Ekārnava or the Great Deluge, Bhagavān Visnu, who is possessed of the powers of knowledge was lying down on the Cosmic Serpent Śeṣa, resorting to the sleep attainable through Yoga A lotus of thousand-petals appeared from his navel On that lotus the grandfather (Pitāmaha) of all the worlds, the creator of the worlds Bhagavān Hiranyagarbha, who was as red as vermilion, manifested Himself The most illustrious Brahmā looked around and saw water alone On the lotus, where the Creator of the worlds was sitting, two drops of water urged by Śrī Nārāyana were clinging already as the signs of the two qualities, viz Rajas and Tamas

Bhagavān, who has neither beginning nor end, looked at one of the two drops It got transformed into a Daitya named Madhu That Daitya had the complexion of honey's colour and was very charming The second drop changed into another very powerful Daitya following the will of Bhagavān He got the name 'Kaitabha ' Both of these Daityas were very valiant and powerful

With the help of the lotus-stalk they reached the place where the glorious Brahmā was sitting busy in creating the worlds Near

him were the four Vedas assuming very beautiful form. The eyes of the powerful and monstrous Daityas first fell on the Vedas which they snatched away. Carrying the Vedas they entered the north-eastern ocean and went to Rasātala.

"Vedas are my eyes Vedas are my miraculous powers. Vedas indeed are my highest resort and the Vedas themselves are the god worshipped by me." Thus lamented the aggrieved Creator silently not perceiving the Vedas near him "A great calamity has indeed fallen on me by the loss of the Vedas Who will deliver me from this misery ? Who will restore the Vedas ?" Brahmā thought And then He prayed to the all-restraining and omnipotent Śrī Nārāyana Brahmā said:

"O lotus-eyed one ! I am your son born from your form pure and predominant with *sattva* You are Īśvara, Nature or Svabhāva, Self-born and Puruṣottama I am endowed with the eyes in the form of the Vedas Through your mercy I am beyond Time (Kāla), for Time cannot prevail upon me. The Vedas which are my eyes have been stolen away by Dānavas I have become, as it were, blind O God, give up the sleep Please wake up Bring me back my eyes, since I am your dear devotee and you are my dearest lord "

Hearing this sincere and pathetic prayer of Hiranyagarbha, Śrī Nārāyana at once woke up from His sleep In order to restore the Vedas that All-soul, the Supreme Lord manifested Himself as the handsome and illustrious Hayagrīva This form was puissant, glorious and charming He had infinite power and valiance His valour and prowess knew no bounds and every limb of His body radiated splendour and brilliance

17. Bhagavān Hari, the Saviour of Gajendra—

It was a terribly hot midday in summer season Gajendra (the great elephant) along with his companions became restless with excessive thirst Smelling the air blowing with the fragrance of lotus flowers, Gajendra approached a very beautiful, attractive and extensive lake

The elephant entered the lake's water which was quite pure, cool and sweet First he quenched his thirst taking water and then



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removed his fatigue bathing in it Afterwards he started playing in water Filling water in his trunk he began to shower upon the female elephants to help them bathe and beagn to make young elephants drink water putting his trunk in their mouths Other female elephants too were engaged in bathing that elephant showering water from their trunks and were thus showing respect to him

All of a sudden Gajendra cried aloud raising up his trunk Quite unnoticed a crocodile had appeared there and caught hold of elephant's foot. Gajendra tried to release His foot with all his might, but could not succeed His foot could not be released. Seeing their lord in trouble all the female elephants, the young elephants as well as numerous other elephants were much perplexed They started running inside and outside the lake with their trunks raised upwards and all crying aloud to save Gajendra They tried their best, but could not succeed

Due to the curse of the great sage Agastya, the king Indradyumna himself had become the elephant whereas it was the great Gandharva Hūhū, who was changed into a crocodile by the curse of the great sage Devala He also was very valiant

The scuffle was going on Gajendra was struggling hard to go out and the crocodile was trying with might and main to drag Gajendra inside The pure water of the lake became dirty. The lotuses were ruined The creatures living in the water were terribly perturbed This tussle of the elephant and the crocodile continued for a hundred years Both of them survived Seing this the gods were wonder struck

At last the body of Gajendra slackened He lost strength of his body and the spirit of mind, but the crocodile being a creature of water, did not lose even a whit of its strength and vigour His strength rather increased and with renewed zeal he began to drag the elephant applying more power than before

Helpless in every way, Gajendra had his life in danger His pride of strength and valour was routed He became completely despaired, but since he had constantly worshipped Bhagavān in his previous life, he had his memory of Bhagavān spontaneously

revived. He resolved in his mind: "For the fear of the fierce Death (*kāla*), I go to the refuge of omnipotent Lord who is the shelter for all living and insentient creatures.

Lord Viṣṇu manifests himself as Lord *Hari* to protect the oppressed elephant. Lord blessed, O dear one Gajendra. I vouchsafe unclouded memory of myself at the moment of death to them who recite this eulogy by waking before sunrise in *Brāhma* Muhūrta (a period extending over two hours and twenty four minutes before sunrise)

18. Bhagavān Paraśurāma—

Renukā (the daughter of the great king Renu) and the devoted wife of the great sage Jamadagni, begot five children—Vasumāna, Vasusena, Vasu, Visvāvasu and the fifth as well as the youngest Paraśurāma. Of them Paraśurāma is the partial incarnation (aṁśa-avatāra) of Śrī Viṣṇu, the ruler of the entire creation Immediately after his appearance he went to the mountain Kailāsa to concentrate on the worship of Bhagavān Śankara Mahādeva, the supreme lord of the gods being pleased with him told him to ask for a boon. Paraśurāma said: "O God, give me such an infallible weapon, which may never become blunt "

Bhagavān Śiva presented to him paraśu (an axe) along with other weapons. That divine Paraśu was built of the effulgence of Bhagavān Śankara's same effulgence with which the disc (cakra) of Śrī Viṣṇu and the bolt (vajra) of Indra was fashioned Since he carried that extremely sharp-edged and infallible paraśu (axe), the name of Bhagavān Rāma being thus associated with paraśu came to be known as Paraśurāma

19. Bhagavān Vyāsa—

Bhagavān Vyāsa who was possessed of super-human powers, was the incarnation of a Śaktī of Bhagavān Nārāyana Kalāvatāra). He appeared as the son of Maharsi Parāśara He was born from the illustrious lady Satyavatī, the fostered daughter of Kaivartarāja, or the king of the fishermen, in an island of Yamunā. As such he is also called as 'pārāśarya' and Dvaipāyana'. His complexion [illegible] dark black and hence his name Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana. As he [illegible] adari-forest, he is also known

as Bādarāyana He automatically acquired the knowledge of the Vedas along with the auxiliary sciences (Vedāṅgas) and Itihāsa and succeeded in the true cognition of the supreme soul which is heard to be attained by others even by sacrifices involving austerities fasting, penances and study of the Vedas

He composed the Epic Mahābhārata, only he had the authority to make four divisions of Veda Hence he was called Vedvyasa (who had made divisions of Vedas) He granted power of Divine vision to Sañjaya through which he could behold the cosmic form of Lord Krsna and could hear the Divine Song Gītā sung by Lord Krsna to Arjuna.

20. Bhagavān Haṁsa—

Once the four-faced Brahmā, the Pitāmaha of the worlds, was sitting in his divine court, when his mind-born sons the four children known as Sanaka and others arrived there stark naked and bowed down on the lotus-like feet of their father Brahmā. As ordered by Brahmā, all those four children sat on separate seats Other members of the court remained quiet and calm in the honour of the children Sanaka and others

Those children enquired very humbly "O father Citta or mind stuff is always engrossed in *gunas* or the objects and *guna*, too, penetrate into every faculty They attract each other ! Their relation is permanent How then a person cherishing for liberation, can withdraw the mind stuff from the objects ? How can his *citta* become free from attributes *(guna)* or devoid of the objects *nirvisaya* ? If even after obtaining the human life the liberation is not realized, the whole life becomes futile.

Brahmā, who is the supreme among the gods, self-born and the creator of the creatures could not understand the root cause of the doubt in the question He could not understand the fundamental point of the question He began concentrating on Ādipurusa, the Supreme Soul

In front of all present there Śrī Bhagavān suddenly appeared as an extremely charming, shining and glorious Hamsa (swan) Influenced by the extra mundane glory of that swan, Brahmā, Sanaka and others as well as all the members of the court stood

up in respect All of them bowed down to salute Śrī Bhagavān with great devotion After that they worshipped him properly offering water for washing and presenting *arghya*. They got him seated on a clean and beautiful seat

"Who are you ?" asked the children anxious to know about that extremely illustrious swan

By the answer given by the Supreme Lord, Hamsa, the doubt of the sages Sanaka and others was dispelled away They worshipped and praised Bhagavān with great devotion In front of Brahmā, Śrī Bhagavān who had assumed the form of a great swan (Mahāhamsa) disappeared and went to His holy place

21. Bhagavān Śrī Rāma—

The universally famous Śrī Rāmacandra is definitely Bhagavān (possessed of six superhuman powers) He is the non-dual, Highest Bliss and the Supreme Soul I repeatedly salute that Śrī Rāmacandra, who is *sat* (existence), cit (consciousness) and *Ānanda* (bliss) and who is the form of the three worlds—*bhuh, bhuvah* and *Svah*

On the prayers of the gods, the Supreme Brahma, Bhagavān Śrī Hari Himself took up four forms through the parts of His *amsa* and became the four sons of the King Daśaratha, namely Rāma, Laksmana, Bharata and Śatrughna

22. Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa—

It was the month of Bhādra, the eighth day (astamī), the Rohinī *naksatra* On the earth as well as in the sky everywhere the moment was auspicious The time was midnight Clouds full of water were as if expressing their pleasure by their low rumbling sounds Very pleasant, cool wind was blowing and at that time the earth's highest bliss, and the greatest fortune appeared The Lord of the entire creation, protector of the cows, Brāhmanas and saintly persons, the master of the world appeared in front of Vāsudeva and Devakī in four-armed form The prison became illumined, and most propitious All the miseries and tribulations of Vāsudeva and Devakī ended for ever The Infinte Bhagavān came to be known as Vāsudeva for being the son of Vasudeva

23. Bhagavān Buddha—

That Śrī Bhagavān had the incarnation as Gautama Buddha the founder of Buddha Dharma and the illustrious son of king Śuddodhana is a matter of dispute Bhagavān Buddhadeva as described in the Purānas had his manifestation in Kikata country near Gaya The name of his gracious father is said to be Ajana This context is of Incarnation of Lord Budha as described in the Purānas

24. Bagavān Kalki—

A very pious and venerable Brāhmana of righteous conduct named Visnuyāsa will be born in the village Sambhala He will be simple and gracious He will be an extremely affectionate devotee of Śrī Bhagavān In the house of that most blessed Brāhmana Visnuyāsa, the Supreme Brahma, who is the one receptacle or all virtues, the producer, sustainer and destroyer of the entire creation will appear as Bhagavān Kalki Wonderful rays will be emanating from every hair of his body. He will be endowed with great intellect and valour, a great soul, of noble conduct, and a well-wisher of all people

Merely by a thought in the mind of Visnuyāsa's son everything desired by him will come to him, such as desired vehicles, weapons, fighters and armours He will be sovereign ruler and establish the kingdom of Dharma He will be of liberal mind, and glorious He will give happiness to the world suffering from tribulations He will appear to put an end to Kaliyuga

Bhagvān Śankara Himself will impart Kalki Bhagavān the training in weapons and missiles and Bhagavān Paraśurāma will impart him the teachings of the Vedas

He riding on a horse named Devadatta will destory all the Dasyus (robbers) spread on the earth in the guise of kings and the Mlecchas of crooked nature. That most glorious Bhagavān Kalki will perform Aśvamedha sacrifice after having killed all the sinners, evil-doers and wicked persons, and in this sacrifice he will give away the entire earth to the Brāhmanas as gifts



Glory of a Vaiṣṇava

विष्णोरयं यतो ह्यासीत् तस्माद्वैष्णव उच्यते ।
सर्वेषां चैव वर्णानां वैष्णवः श्रेष्ठ उच्यते ॥

Having affinity with Lord Viṣnu Vaisnavas are called Vaiṣṇavas They are considered supremely good in all castes and creeds

((Padmapurāna Uttarakhanda)

जीवञ्छवो भागवताङ्घ्रिरेणुं न जातु मर्त्योऽभिलभेत यस्तु ।
श्रीविष्णुपद्या मनुजस्तुलस्याः श्वसञ्छवो यस्तु न वेद गन्धम् ॥

A mortal, who has never bathed himself in the dust from the feet of the Lord's devotees, is really dead, though said to be living, even so the man who has never known the fragrance of sacred Tulasī (basil) leaves offered at the feet of Lord Viṣṇu is like a breathing corpse

(Bhāgavata II 3 23)

'अर्चेद्विष्णुं शिलादी॰'

One who considers the image of Visnu a statue, Vaisnava preceptor a mortal, a vaisnava a man of low or high caste, consecrated water of Holy feet of Viṣṇu and his devoties ordinary water, Visnu mantra a common word, and Lord Visnu an ordinary deity, deserves damnation

(Padmapurāna)

न किंचित् साधवो धीरा भक्ता ह्येकान्तिनो मम ।
वाञ्छन्त्यपि मया दत्तं कैवल्यमपुनर्भवम् ॥

As a matter of fact pious men of wisdom exclusively devoted to me seek nothing not even find beatitude characterised by freedom from rebirth though conferred by me

(Bhāgavata XI 20 34)

मत्सेवया प्रतीतं च सालोक्यादिचतुष्टयम् ।
नेच्छन्ति सेवया पूर्णाः कुतोऽन्यत्कालविद्रुतम् ॥

Feeling sated through devotion; they do not even desire the four types of final beatitude though attained through service rendered to me How then can they cover anything else, such as the status of God-Indra, which is subject to the ravages of time

(Bhāgavata IX 4 67)

त्रिभुवनविभवहेतवेऽप्यकुण्ठस्मृतिरजितात्मसुरादिभिर्विमृग्यात् ।
न चलति भगवत्पदारविन्दाल्लवनिमिषार्धमपि यः स वैष्णवाग्र्यः ॥

He is the foremost of the votaries of Lord Visnu whose mind is fixed on the invariable Lord, whose memory of the Lord is ever fresh, and who even for the sovereignty of all the three worlds and even for half the time taken by the twinkling of an eye does not turn away from the adoration of the Lord's lotus like feet, which are sought after by the gods and others

(Bhāgavata XI 2 53)



यद्यदाचरति श्रेष्ठस्तत्तदेवेतरो जनः ।
स यत्प्रमाणं कुरुते लोकस्तदनुवर्तते ॥

For whatever a great man does, that very thing other men also do, whatever standard he sets up, the generality of men follow the same

—Gītā III 21

श्रेयान् स्वधर्मो विगुणः परधर्मात्स्वनुष्ठितात् ।
स्वधर्मे निधनं श्रेयः परधर्मो भयावहः ॥

One's own duty, though devoid of merit, is preferable to the duty of another well performed Even death in the performance of one's own duty brings blessedness, another's duty is fraught with fear

—Gītā III 35

वीतरागभयक्रोधा मन्मया मामुपाश्रिताः ।
बहवो ज्ञानतपसा पूता मद्भावमागताः ॥

Completely rid of passion, fear and anger, wholly absorbed in Me, depending on Me, and purified by the penance of wisdom, many have become one with Me even in the past

—Gītā IV 10



Lord Viṣṇu—the most Active God

—S K. Trivedi

"We are not idol-worshippers, we are ideal worshippers", shot back the beaming monk, Svāmī Vivekānanda, on the Indians being condemned for worshipping the idols. It is a common, though entirely baseless and mistaken belief among the other religionists (specially in the west) that Indians believe in many gods They do worship many gods, no doubt, (as many as thirty three crores of them) but with a small 'g' not the capital one, and it is not strange for a society full of faith to the brim, in the Supreme Being But the thing worshipped is the soul not body, and it is the manifestation of the same, one and only one, Super Soul Seeing, realizing and worshipping the Lord in each and every atom is the true belief and worship; and one can not be blamed for practising it.

In mathematics we talk of a point as having no dimension at all—no length, no breadth, and no height. The aggregate of points is a one dimensional line, the aggregate of lines is a two dimensional surface, and the aggregate of surface is a three dimensional solid figure. The Supreme Being is like the mathematical point with no dimensions of its own, but all the dimensions come from Him and through Him He has no shape, no attributes, no characteristics, no properties of any kind but is the origin and sustainer of all the shapes, attributes, etc This is the secret of the whole philosophy, religion, belief, faith and worship

The Hindu triad (Trimūrti or Trinity) represents the three most important aspects of the Super Lord—creation, preservation and destruction The source (Brahmā) is simply forgotten (The temples of the Creator are very rare and He has very few devotees) and the vast ocean, the last refuge, the Supreme end, which consumes one and all is too big to be described—

अप्सितगिरिसमं स्यात् कज्जलं सिन्धुपात्रे
सुरतरुवरशाखा लेखनी पत्रमुर्वी।
लिखति यदि गृहीत्वा शारदा सर्वकालं
तदपि तव गुणानामीश पारं न याति ॥

O Lord Śiva ! With ocean as inkpot having in it ink of black mountain, the twig of celestial tree being the pen, the surface of the whole earth being paper to write on, so equipped Goddess Śāradā makes an attempt to describe at all times your attributes and glories even that attempt cannot be a successful one That means your glory is indescribable

The preserver attracts all the attention The part of a river flowing through the plain is the most important, soothing and the vital one It is the most beautiful, serene, useful, sustaining and good. That is why Lord Visnu scores over the others

God of the Earth—

Lord Brahmā is a sage (a ṛṣi, an intellectual), Lord Śiva, an ascetic, both unconcerned with the day-to-day world, both dwelling in the sky, one on the lotus petals, the other on the top of the highest peak Lord Viṣnu is the God of the earth in real sense ever conscious of His responsibility, ever busy with His tremendous work He chooses (for himself) the bed of snakes (not of thorns, let alone that of roses) He is a true householder, the carrier of the tradition Looking after the house, entertaining the guests, protecting the good and destroying the evil, enforcing the law and keeping the order Lord Brahmā is depicted with four heads and four arms—equality of thought and action; Lord Śiva, with five heads but only two arms. (A destroyer is better with fewer hands ! He needs to think more and with the keen sight of extra eyes-very very careful action, not mad rage on His part The third eye, very rarely used for a destructive purpose is protection against any thoughtless act), Lord Visnu has only one head but four long and powerful arms for less thinking but more action These arms are His assets like Lord Brahmā's heads and Lord Śiva's third eye Their carriers (vehicles) too have their own significance Brahmā's goose is known for its discriminatory wisdom, Śiva's bull is morality, justice and virtue—incarnate,

with slow but steady step Viṣṇu can't afford such luxury He needs Garuḍa, the fastest of the fast to reach anywhere and everywhere even at the shortest notice. Sometimes even Garuḍa is not adequate and He has to run on foot. His colour also has much significance. The cloud colour reminds one of a cloud, the singlemost vital item for the world, the chief source of water, the sustainer of the world As the saying goes: "The year minus the two rainy months is zero" Nothing can exist without water Water is the synonym of life. His nearness to ocean as well as to the earth is beneficial to both of them.

The most Humble Lord—

The householder is the most level-headed of all the Āśramites Fickle-mindedness or irascibility are foreign to Him. Lord Visnu confronts even the worst situation with monumental patience and unmatched humility. Sage Bhrgu (one of the ten patriarchs created by the first Manu), reprehended by the creator and angrily chased by the Destroyer for his unpalatable utterances or misdemeanour, went to the extent of kicking the sleeping Lord, Visnu, full on the chest with such great force that the whole foot got printed and remains so even today The humble Lord showed no sign of anger, irritation or uneasiness He just began to rub the offending foot gently and tenderly inquired if it was hurt This earned Him the respect of all. When Nārada exploded with anger on being deprived of a lovely and comely 'wife' and poured curses on Him, He simply smiled, accepted the curses in toto and then slowly unfolded the plot, throwing the irate Risi shocked and bewildered beyond belief and falling prostrate. "This is my way of curing my devotees," He tells him affectionately and makes him forget all that had happened and he had done. In the case of Vṛndā, the pious wife of the demon king Jālandhara, he leads her astray only for the welfare of the universe and takes all her curses with bowed head No parallel can be drawn between the Vrndā-episode and the Ahalyā-episode. But for the innocence of the two spouses, nothing is common in the two, Gautama and Jālandhara were poles apart in their doings, and so were Indra and Lord Viṣṇu in their intentions Gautama a kind hearted sage,

had had no ill-will towards anyone and should not have been disturbed, Jālandhara, a merciless torturer, had to be eliminated by any means whatsoever Lord Visṇu was forced to take the extreme measure only when all others had proved unfruitful Lord Śiva had already exhausted all the other possibilities and alternatives without any success. No lust was involved in it while Indra was led purely by his uncontrolled lust with no good thoughts of any kind or for anyone. Then Vrndā herself curses the culprit, not Jālandhara. The reverse is the case with Indra Ahalyā too, could curse him and save at least herself from the wrath of her husband, but she was too stunned and dumbfounded to utter a syllable

The Most Active God—

It is not amazing that Lord Visnu had to come too often to the earth and in so many incarnations After all, it is his world and He knows better than anyone else what is good for it and how to achieve it. He has to keep His charge throbbing and He does so even at the greatest cost and discomfort to Himself He unequivocally enunciates His principle—

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत ।
अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥
परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम् ।
धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय संभवामि युगे युगे ॥

and keeps it to the word He comes to the earth, rather makes Himself tangible (The Omnipresent need not come or go anywhere He is everywhere One goes or comes to a place from somewhere else, not from there itself) in every age and in every form—

मत्स्यः कूर्मो वराहश्च नरसिंहोऽथ वामनः ।
रामो रामश्च रामश्च बुद्धः कल्की च ते दश ॥

The reasons are also clearly stated—

वेदानुद्धरते जगन्निवहते भूगोलमुद्बिभ्रते
दैत्यं दारयते बलिं छलयते क्षत्रक्षयं कुर्वते ।
पौलस्त्यं जयते हलं कलयते कारुण्यमातन्वते
म्लेच्छान्मूर्च्छयते दशाकृतिकृते कृष्णाय तुभ्यं नमः ॥

His sleep is disturbed all the more by His unusually liberal colleagues, and more so by His unpredictably kill-joy devotees, like Nārada They can bless or curse anybody at will and cause havoc to the world within the twinkling of an eye. It is not surprising that the demons rarely go for Lord Viṣṇu because once they turn to Him, the whole villainy evaporates from them and they clearly see the eternal light and enjoy it eternally. A story is said about Rāvaṇa, the master disguise, someone suggested, Why don't you disguise as Rāma and win Sītā over ? Do you think, I did not try? retorted the demon king gloomily I did so many times, but whenever I disguised as Rāma, all the women appeared mothers to me How could I have any evil intentions towards them? Such is the sublimating effect of the Deity and His incarnations

The Vaisnavas are supposed to be the most immaculate of the devotees Their cult is a model of simplicity, purity (more inner than outer), fellow feeling and all the good qualities a person should possess The ideal of the Indian culture is the perfect man, the model for whom is Lord Viṣnu "यो न हृष्यति, न द्वेष्टि " The poets (specially the Bhakta poets) have never felt tired of singing the praises of the Vaisnavas and have asked the Lord Himself (directly or indirectly) again to tell their characteristics so that others can emulate them A person like Vibhīsana who can call a spade a spade without any hesitation is very rare even today It is unfortunate that he is branded a 'traitor' He was a traitor neither to his sovereign brother nor to his motherland. 'Loyalty to whom?' has been knocking at the doors of the intellectuals all over the globe, but no unanimous response has even been heard Vibhīsana has showed the way to many, in some of the most difficult circumstances Torn between so many opposing forces, he finds no choice less painful but like a true statesman he prefers the nations over the ruler, like a true devotee, the Lord over the master, and like a true religionist, the truth over the relations

All the incarnations of Lord Visnu have become history and integral parts of the culture Most of the eighteen purāṇas deal mostly with His activities Lord Rāma and Lord Kṛṣna have

superseded the rest. Today whatever is left in Hinduism is because of these two incarnations. With a great percentage of illiteracy, the Indian masses have hardly seen the Vedas and Upanisadas and know little of their contents, but they are fully familiar with the history, story and legends of these two Avatāras The original immigrants to such distant countries as Mauritius and Surinam had taken only 'Gutakā Rāmāyaṇa' and 'Hanumāna Cālīsā' with them and never wavered from their path even after centuries of thier leaving of the motherland Most of the Indian literature and art, worth its name, is predominantly occupied by these two great Lords and newer and newer inspired talents are pouring forth newer and newer ideas each day

Philosophy of the Philosophies—

The book more famous than the Vedas and truly representative of the Indian thought is the Bhagavadgītā, the philosophy of the philosophies Perhaps it stands second only to the Bible in editions (but may be ahead of it in readership) of late it has found great favour with the other religionists because of its objective treatment and purely secular approach (secularism is not anti-religionism It is the search for the inherent values of life and the missing links without any religious prejudice of any hue. It is the temporal religion, for multifarious society) Its honesty of the purpose is too difficult to resist or ignore A non-resident Indian (irrespective of his caste, colour or creed) is supposed to know all about Gītā and Yoga He is often requested to teach Yoga, at least some postures (Āsanas) No other book has attracted the attention of the westerners towards the rich heritage of India as much as the Gītā

Had Lord Viṣṇu not been so alert and active, the evil forces would have long ago swallowed up the others and might have destroyed the whole universe (including, of course, themselves) It is the result of His untiring activities only that civilization is still thriving Let us pray and invoke the inexhaustible mercy of the most active Lord for the well-being of the whole universe—

शान्ताकारं भुजगशयनं पद्मनाभं सुरेशं
विश्वाधारं गगनसदृशं मेघवर्णं शुभाङ्गम् ।

लक्ष्मीकान्तं कमलनयनं योगिभिर्ध्यानगम्यं
वन्दे विष्णुं भवभयहरं सर्वलोकैकनाथम् ॥

Obeisance to Visnu, the dispeller of the fear of rebirths, the one, Lord of all the regions, possessed of a tranquil form, lying on a bed of snake, from whose navel has sprung the lotus, the Lord of all celestials, the support of the universe, similar to the sky, possessed of the colour of a cloud and possessed of handsome limbs, the Lord of Lakṣmī (the Goddess of Wealth), having lotus-like eyes and realized by Yogīs in meditation



दर्शनीयतिलको वनमालादिव्यगन्धतुलसीमधुमत्तैः ।
अलिकुलैरलघुगीतमभीष्टमाद्रियन् यर्हि संधितवेणुः ॥
सरसि सारसहंसविहङ्गाश्चारुगीतहृतचेतस एत्य ।
हरिमुपासत ते यतचित्ता हन्त मीलितदृशो धृतमौनाः ।

When Śrī Krsna wearing (on his forehead) a sacred mark (so) charming to look at, applies the flute to His lips, admiring the high-pitched and agreeable humming of swarms of black bees drunk with the honey of Tulasī (basil) flowers forming part of His wreath of sylvan flowers and emitting an ethereal fragrance, the cranes, swans and other birds (dwelling) in lakes, dear me, approach Śrī Hari, their heart captivated by the dulcet music (of the flute), and flock by His side with their mind (fully) collected and eyes closed and observing (complete) silence

—*Bhāgavata (X 35 10-11)*

When Śiśupāla, Śālva, Paundraka and other contemporary princes attained salvation by thinking at all times of the gait and gracious look of Śrī Krsna, though in a hostile spirit, there can be no doubt about the liberation of those selfless devotees who have devoted themselves wholly and solely to the lotus feet of Śrī Krsna

—*Ibid (XI 5 48)*



The Concept of Viṣṇu in Dvaita Vedānta

—*Dr B. N K Sharma*

In popular estimation, Visnu is a sectarian God like others of the class This is the assumption behind the Sanmata theory No doubt, the great Vaisnava teacher Rāmānuja speaks of Visnu as the 'Brahma blazing forth from the Upaniṣads ' In his *Vedārthasamgraha* he discusses the ralative position of the Trimūrtis with reference to the Paurānika sources But he did not pursue the matter systematically and carry forward the investigation of the issue with reference to the Upanisads themselves and the Vaidika sources in particular The hostility mounted against him by the Chola king in Tamilnadu was probably one reason for Rāmānuja's cooling down in this question

Ācārya Madhva, founder of the Dvaita system of Vedānta in the 13th century, is thus the first Vaisnava Ācārya to institute a thorough going investigation of the problem with special reference to earliest Vaidika sources including the Mantras, Āranyakas and the Upanisads extending it to the Brahma Sūtras and the Gītā as well and deliver his judgment *Brahmaśabdaśca Visnāveva*.

In the Samskrta language, proper names are based on their etymology *(vyutpatti)* or root meaning—such as Indra, Candra, Varuna, Krsna, Rāma, Śiva etc

Ācārya Madhva proceeds systematically on the basis of the *vyutpatti* of terms like 'Brahmā', 'Viṣnu' and 'Nārāyana'—to limit ourselves—the three most relevant names germane to our problem

'Brahma' of the Upanisads is derived from 'Brh'-brhi 'Vrddhau'– The root Bṛh means 'to be pervasive'—which, applied to the Supreme Being, must necessarily be taken in its unlimited sense of being *all-pervasive* All-pervasion in its metaphysical sense as applied to the Supreme Being must necessarily be in terms of

all-pervasion in Time, Space and Sovereign attributes of Supremacy Ācārya Madhva designates these as 'देशत कालतश्चैव गुणतश्च त्रिधा ततिः' We thus arrive at the first step or starting point of our investigation that 'Brahma' of the Vedānta must be the unlimited Being in time, space and attributes i.e existing at all times and everywhere and possessed of countless auspicious attributes-untouched by materiality—as Brahma by hypothesis, is *A-Prākṛta* (transcending Matter) Hence the pressure of Prākṛtika attributes of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas are ruled out in Brahma. This is what the Śrutis and our Purānas mean when they say—

निरनिष्टो निरवद्यः (Śruti)

सत्त्वादयो न सन्तीशे न सन्ति प्राकृता गुणाः ।

(Visnu Purāna)

Now 'Visnu' is the etymologically derived from *Viś* (विश्) to enter, *Vis* to pervade and other senses The ण् and उ (in Viṣ-n-u) have to be separately accounted for. Ācārya Madhva throws new light on this point that in the name of Viṣ-n-u (from विष्लृ=व्याप्तौ) the syllables ष (sa) and ण (na) signify power of energy (prāṇa-śakti) and balam (वल) respectively 'णकारो वल षकार प्राण आत्मा' *(Aitareya Āranyaka)* according to the analysis of the *Aitareya Āranyaka* of the Rgveda This Āranyaka text says that one who studies the *Ṛksamhitā* with the clear understanding that it is attuned to the Supreme Being whose name is integrated with the syllables ष and ण understands the real purport of the Samhitā This clearly points to the fact that Vis-n-u is the Supreme Reality to whom the Sūktas under different names of deities are primarily addressed The particle *u* in Vis-n-u expresses the sense of 'ताच्छील्य' having a natural disposition to be all-pervasive, source of all energy and power—

णकारं च षकारं च वलचेष्टात्मकं वदन्
तज्ज्ञानपूर्वकत्वेन संहिताध्ययनं तथा
(उपसर्गत्वतो वेस्तु)[1] ताच्छील्यार्थादुनस्तथा ।

(Madhva Anuvyākhyāna)

Thus 'Visnu' denotes the Supreme Being who is the subject matter of all the Vedas primarily or as the Gītā puts it 'वेदैश्च सर्वैरहमेव

1 This is based on a different interpretation without reference to the root *Viś*

वेद्य' (Gītā XV 15), Visnu's having entered into all creation is referred to in the Taittirīya Upanisad 'तत्सृष्ट्वा तदेवानुप्राविशत्' and in Taitt Āranyaka, 'विवेश भूतानि चराचराणि' It is this Being which is called Para Brahma by the knowers of truth, *says the same Āranyaka*—

तदेवर्तं तदु सत्यमाहुः तदेव ब्रह्म परमं कवीनाम्।

Western Vaidika scholars and their Indian followers among modern scholars still think that the Vaidika religion was Polytheistic and has not risen to the conception of One Supreme Reality. This is belied by the forthright statement of the Rgveda The sages call that One by the different names *of various gods*–such as Agni, Yama, Indra, Mitra and so on·—

इन्द्रं मित्रं वरुणमग्निमाहुरथो दिव्यः स सुपर्णो गरुत्मान्।
एकं सद्विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति अग्निं यमं मातरिश्वानमाहुः।

It is a mistranslation of *Ekam Sad Viprā bahudhā vadanti* to say that *the one Real is regarded as many by the wise* meaning that Brahma or the one Reality appears or is apprehended by ignorance as 'Many'-which is what Monism says, and which is further extended to mean that all plurality is an appearance of the one superimposed on it by *Avidyā* The *content of the Mantra is absolutely against any such misinterpretation* All that it can mean is that the names of the several individual gods *(devas)* who are also lauded in the various Sūktas of the Vedas, are applied by the knowers of truth to the One Supreme Being, *immanent in them all,* in the highest primary sense of their connotation *(paramamukhya-vrtti),* while the individual gods themselves with their limited jurisdiction, are denoted by their names *in a restricted sense* as Indra, Varuna etc This commits us to the acceptance of the several gods under the aegis of One Supreme

But what is the authority for holding such a view ? Ācārya Madva points to the Rgvedic text·

यो देवानां नामधा एक एव।

There is only One Supreme who bears the names of all the other gods This does not mean that the several gods alternatively are entitled and be called by all the other names also The force of the emphatic particle *eva* forbids the possibility of applying all the

other names to each of them alternatively. Says Madhva·—

इत्येवशब्दात् नान्येषां सर्वनामता ।

The next question to be settled is who then is the *Sarvanāmavān*? How to identify him? The Ācārya first of all points to a mark of recognition (liṅga) of the identity of this Supreme as *Viṣṇu* in the subsequent Vaidika passage of the *same Sūkta* referring to Him as the One whose navel was the source of emergence of the cosmos

अजस्य नाभावध्येकमर्पितं यस्मिन् विश्वा भुवनानि तस्थुः ।

Expanded in the light of the Purānas this points to Visnu—"Padmanābha" of the Purānas whose purpose is to expound the Vedas

Apart from the mark of inference (linga) to identify the Sarvanāmavān with Visnu Ācārya Madhva cites the evidence of the Bhāllaveya Śruti which says·

नामानि सर्वाणि यमाविशन्ति
तं वै विष्णुं परममुदाहरन्ति ।

Which means All the names of the gods apply *fully* in their plenary sense to *Visnu* They call him the Supreme. The Bhāllaveya Śruti, not now extant, is quoted by Śankarācārya and Sureśvara also which shows that a Śruti of this name was once extant and known to them. Reposing in the waters of the universal Deluge at the time of Mahāpralaya as the only one breathing windless by its own inherent power is an indisputable mark of the Supreme Reality This is what the *Manu Smṛti* says while calling that Being 'Nāra-ayana'-another distinctive name of Viṣnu.

Madhvācārya has given us two unmistakable clues to the recognition of Visnu-Nārāyana as the Supreme Being of the Vedas and Upanisads The first is from the Chāndogya Upanisad

Brahma is all-pervasive Meditate on *it* as Jala-an (तत् जलान् इति शांत उपासीत) Here the word Jalān (from Jale aniti iti Jalān) refers to the Supreme Being reposing in the waters of the universal deluge, when the world was yet in the womb of creation This derivation of (Tat-jalān)—'Tajjalān' is more acceptable than the other one commonly suggested by other commentators—as *Tajjam, Tallam* and *Tadanam* as it obliges us to *reverse* the order of Jīvana

(subsistence in life) or 'an' and dissolution of existence *(laya)* a universally and logically accepted (जायते, अस्ति, लीयते)

The famous Nāsadīya Sūkta of the Rgveda (X.129) referred to by Ācārya Madhva confirms the identification of the One Supreme Being, which reposed in the waters of the universal Deluge and was breathing windless by itself

आनीदवातं स्वधया तदेकम्।

With what is spoken of as Jala-an in the *Chāndogya* The Nāsadiya Sūkta itself concludes with the declaration

तस्माद्धा अन्यन्न परः किंचनास।

"Other than and above 'It', there was nothing else" The Ācārya clarifies that the two words *anyat* (other) and *Paraḥ* (above, superior to) are advisedly used to make it clear that while the waters of the deluge and darkness existed then they were totally dependent on and subject to the Will of the Supreme Thus Ācārya Madhva has established his thesis that Brahma, Visnu and Nārāyana all are synonymous in content of meaning When he therefore says in his Sūtra-bhāsya. *Brahmaśabdaśca Visnau eva,* he means that as 'Brahma' connotes a Supreme Reality which is free from the threefold limitations of space, time and attributes and Visṇu also connotes the same thing His statement 'ब्रह्मशब्दश्च विष्णावेव' is fully justified, as explained by Vyāsatīrtha in his *Candrikā* —

तदेतदभिप्रेत्योक्तं भाष्ये—
ब्रह्मशब्दश्च विष्णावेव इति। त्रिविधपूर्तिवाचको हि ब्रह्मशब्दः।



Viśiṣṭādvaita

Vaisnava Philosophy as expounded by the great Swāmī Rāmā-nujācāryajī is known as Viśistādvaita According to it, whatever there is, is Brahma, but Brahma is not of a homogeneous nature; it contains within itself element of plurality owing to which it truly manifests itself in a diversified world The world with its variety of material forms of existence and individual soul is not unreal, but real parts of Brahma's Nature

The individual soul according to the above theory is really individual, it has indeed sprung from Brahma and is never outside Brahma But nevertheless it enjoys a separate personal existence and will remain a personality for ever even after liberation from the circle of birth and death

This theory also accepts non-dualism of Brahma but not as Śankarācārya enunciates It is not absolute non-dualism of Śrī Śankarācāryajī It is qualified non-dualism. In this qualified non-dualism, Brahma, individual soul and the universe are constituents of one integral Brahma The latter two tattvas though real are within Brahma and dependent on it These two are real, but not outside it and independent of it They have their real existence only within Brahma itself

One mango tree is distinct from another mango tree, this difference is called सजातीय भेद (difference between same quality) A mango tree is different from an apple tree This distinction between the two is called विजातीय भेद (distinction between the two qualities)—A limb of the body is different from another limb, this distinction is termed as स्वगत भेद (difference between the parts of one thing) In this philosophy of three distinctions mentioned above, the first two do not apply in case of Brahma, the individual soul and the universe but the third distinction is applicable The

Brahma, the individual soul and the universe are components of one Integral Brahma, but they differ among themselves and all are real The universe and the soul form the body and the Brahma is the inner soul Thus in this philosophy of Swāmī Rāmānujā-cāryajī, Brahma is termed as 'Cidacidviśiṣṭa Brahma viz Brahma alongwith independent soul and the universe

To understand this conception clearly another illustration is given below A tree has its roots, stem, branches, leaves and fruits The five things are constituents of the one tree, but they are all different against one another when viewed distinctly, but when they are perceived indistinctly, they form one single tree. Similarly, in this theory of Vaiṣṇavism, Brahma, the individual soul and the world are distinct and real as distinguished from one another but when viewed as a single whole only Brahma has his independent existence This theory of Vaiṣṇavism as propounded by the great learned Swāmī Rāmānujācāryajī is known as 'Viśiṣṭādvaita "



हरे राम हरे राम राम राम हरे हरे।
हरे कृष्ण हरे कृष्ण कृष्ण कृष्ण हरे हरे॥

This Sodaśākṣara Mantra of Bhagavān Nārāyana washes out the impurities of *Kali* A better and more efficacious way (of shuffling off impurities) is not found in all the Vedas (Chanting of) these Names tears off the covering of ignorance of a *jīva,* consisting of sixteen folds Then the Supreme *Brahma* reveals Itself just as on the disappearance of clouds the sun appears with all its bright rays

शिवस्य हृदयं विष्णुर्विष्णोश्च हृदयं शिवः।
एतयोरन्तरं मत्त्वा रौरवं नरकं व्रजेत्॥

Visnu is the heart of Śiva and Śiva the heart of Visnu Differentiation between them leads one to the worst hell



Śrī Viṣṇu Bhagavān

—Dr S S Awas

श्रीभूमी यस्य देव्यौ सकलमुनिवराः किंकरा रक्ष्यमण्डं
सृष्ट्याद्याः शिल्पलीलाः कमलजविबुधाः पुत्रपौत्रादयोऽपि ।
वैकुण्ठं नाम धाम स्तुतिरुपनिषदः शासनं शास्त्रमार्गः
सोऽयं वैकुण्ठनाथः श्रियमतिशयिनीं वैष्णवीं नो ददातु ॥
शरीरं वैकुण्ठं हृदयनलिनं वाससदनं
मनोवृत्तिस्ताक्ष्यो मतिरियमथो सागरसुता ।
विहारस्तेऽवस्थात्रितयमसवः पार्षदगणो
न पश्यत्यज्ञा त्वामिह बहिरहो याति जनता ॥

That Visnu the Vaikunthanātha may bestow upon us the greatest Vaisnavī beauty and prosperity, whose consorts are Śrī and Bhūmi, all the Munis are the servants and who is the preserver of Brahmānda, the creation and other actions are whose artistic works, Brahmā and other deities are whose sons and grandsons etc, whose dwelling place is Vaikuntha, all the Upanisads are whose praise-songs, and the entire Śāstras are His teachings for everyone

The body is Vaikuntha, the heart-lotus being His abode, the mind is Garuda (a vehicle of Visnu), this Buddhi is Laksmī, the daughter of ocean, the three states viz waking, dreaming and sound sleep are Thy wandering for pleasure, vital airs of the body are attendants (Pārsada gana) of Thine, but this unwise mankind never sees Thee here, and roams outward

In the Purusa Sūkta of Rgveda Purusa is known as Bhagavān Visnu Śaunaka affirms in Rgvidhāna—

पुरुषस्य हरेः सूक्तं सर्वपापप्रणाशनम् ।

The sūkta of Purusa or Harī annihilates all the sins: It is said in Padampurāṇa that—

भगवानिति शब्दोऽयं तथा पुरुष इत्यपि।
निरुपाधी च वर्तेते वासुदेवे सनातने॥

In the purānas lıke हरिवंश, स्कन्द, विष्णु and नरसिंह etc it ıs declared that Purusa ıs Vısnu Such as—

गोवर्धनाद्रिधरणान्नाथ नन्दसुतोऽपि सन्।
पुरुषस्यांशभूतं त्वां वयं निरणयिष्महि॥

—Harıvamśa Purāna

यथा पुरुषशब्दोऽयं वासुदेवेऽवतिष्ठते।
तथा शंकरशब्दोऽयं महादेवे व्यवस्थितः॥

—Skanda Purāna

देवतिर्यङ्मनुष्येषु पुंनामा भगवान् हरिः॥

—Vısnu Purāna

स एव वासुदेवोऽयं पुरुषः प्रोच्यते बुधैः॥

—Narasımha Purāna

Kālıdāsa, the great poet has wrıtten—

नाभिप्ररूढाम्बुरुहासनेन
संस्तूयमानः प्रथमेन धात्रा।
अमुं युगान्तोचितयोगनिद्रः
संहृत्य लोकान् पुरुषोऽधिशेते।

—Raghu Vamsa, 13 6

Beıng praısed by Vırıñcı the fırst Brahmā sıttıng on the cushıon of lotus sprung from navel of Vısnu, the Purusa drawıng together all the worlds ın Hımself and gettıng Yoganıdrā at the tıme of dıssolutıon of all thıngs, sleeps on ıt (the ocean)

The word 'Purusa[1] ıs also used for Śıva[2] and Brahmā[3] Those wıse persons whose ıntellectual faculty ıs pure or voıd of adherence, do not merge ınto the wrong ınsıstence They know well that—'उपासकाना सिद्धयर्थं ब्रह्मणो रूपकल्पना' 'एकामूर्तिस्त्रयो देवा ब्रह्मविष्णुमहेश्वरा '

In the Purusa Sūkta the three aspects of Purusa are clearly thought over Fırst Trıpātpurusa, second Ekapātpurusa, and the thırd Adhıpurusa

1 Vırıñcı the fırst, Padmabhū the second and Swaymbhū the thırd etc (see Skanda Purāna, Prabhāsa Khanda, chap 15)

2 तत्पुरुषाय विद्महे महादेवाय धीमहि।

3 स वे शरीरी प्रथम स वै पुरुष उच्यते।

1 Tripātpurusa is Paramapurusa, the transcendental one He is known as Nirguna or Nirviśeṣa Brahma or the one a refuge of नित्यलीलाविभूति where in Goloka eternal Līlā, that is incomprehensible and not to be defined, is always going on Ṛgveda declares—

तदस्य प्रियमभि पाथो अश्यां
नरो यत्र देवयवो मदन्ति ।
उरुक्रमस्य स हि बन्धुरित्था
विष्णोः पदे परमे मध्व उत्सः ॥

—Mandala 1, Sūkta 154, Mantra 5

I would attain to that dear domain of His, where sages devoted to Visnu rejoice, by His fourth part who strides over all the worlds, in the Parama Pada of that Visnu a stream of supreme happiness (परानन्द) prevails He attaches us with this मधुर रस (परानन्द) which is free from hunger, thirst, old age, death and revolution of births

Ekapātpurusa is famous as Ekapāda Nārāyana or Mahāvisnu This is also understood as Mahāvirāt Purusa In His hair-holes uncounted Brahmāndas are floating like atoms, keeping this in the mind a certain Brahmā, the presiding deity of a particular Brahmanda had said—

क्वाहं तमोमहदहंखचराग्निवार्भू-
संवेष्टिताण्डघटसप्तवितस्तिकायः ।
क्वेदृग्विधाविगणिताण्डपराणुचर्या-
वाताध्वरोमविवरस्य च ते महित्वम् ॥

(Śrīmadbhāgavata X 14 11)

Where I am a trifling one, having a body of only one Brahmānda covered by प्रकृति (original producer of material world) महत्(Intellctual Principle) अहकार (Self consciousness)

It is said in Devī Bhāgavata also—

पित्रा मात्रा परित्यक्तो जलमध्ये निराश्रयः ।
ब्रह्माण्डासंख्यनाथो यो ददर्शोर्ध्वमनाथवत् ॥
स्थूलात्स्थूलतमः सोऽपि नाम्ना देवो महाविराट् ।
परमाणुर्यथा सूक्ष्मात् परः स्थूलात्तथाप्यसौ ॥
तेजसां षोडशांशोऽयं कृष्णस्य परमात्मनः ।

आधारोऽसंख्यविश्वानां महाविष्णुः सुरेश्वरः ॥
प्रत्येकं रोमकूपेषु विश्वानि निखिलानि च ।

Left desolate by father and mother into the water even then being the controller of countless Brahmāndas, who saw up for refuge like an orphan He was grossest one named as Mahāvirāt. As an atom is the subtler than a subtle so He was larger than a large He is said to be the sixteenth portion of the lights of paramātmā Kṛsna This Mahāvisnu, the God of gods, was substratum of innumerable worlds In each of His hair-holes all the worlds take their places.

From this Mahāvirāt Purusa or Mahāviṣṇu the Virāt or Prakrti (विराट् प्रकृतिर्बहिरिति समाननामानीति योगरत्ने रङ्गरामानुज) and her governing deity (अधिष्ठाता पुरुष or अधिपुरुष) comes out, He is also known as Virāt Purusa or Vairāja Puruṣa This is सप्तवितस्तिकाय or दशाङ्गुलपुरुष His other name is Lokapurusa 1 kālapurusa, 2 Agnipurusa, 3 Pranavapurusa and 4 Yajñapurusa are His other famous forms

This अधिपुरुष is abiding deity of creative properties (Gunas) when रजोगुण leads over all, this is called Brahmā, in the importance of सत्त्वगुण this is called Visnu, in the supremacy of Tamoguna, this is named Śiva As no Guṇa exists in its solitary state, so is the case with Brahmā, Viṣnu and Śiva None can imagine about their loneliness They are three in one So it is said—एका मूर्तिस्त्रयो देवा To say about them that this one is greater and that one smaller, is a fault Only one Lord Mahāviṣṇu holds the forms of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva for the creation, maintenance and destruction respectively

सृष्टिस्थित्यन्तकरणीं ब्रह्मविष्णुशिवात्मिकाम् ।
स संज्ञां याति भगवानेक एव जनार्दनः ॥

—*Visnu Purāna 1 2 66*

According to above exposition we can clearly know the three forms of Visnu one—Tripādvibhūti Nārāyaṇa, the second Ekapāda Nārāyana or Mahāvisnu and the third Visnu being present in the trinity of Gods Viṣnu, sleeping on the bed of Śesa Nāga is said to be one into the union of three God heads—समुद्रे शयानश्च विष्णुस्त्रिमूर्त्यन्तर्गत इति विष्णूत्पत्त्यध्यायवचनजातेनाप्यवगतम् ।

—Appayyadīksita, candrikā Tīkā of Ānanda Laharī II sloka 42

The Tattva, named as Śeṣa is Mahāviṣṇu and also famous in the form of Ananta. Bhāgavata Purāṇa declares—

क्षित्यादिभिरेष किलावृतः
सप्तभिर्दशगुणोत्तरैराण्डकोशः ।
यत्र पतत्यणुकल्पः
सहाण्डकोटिकोटिभिस्तदनन्तः ॥

(VI 16 37)

This egg-shaped universe, which further resembles a bud inasmuchas it is enveloped by seven sheaths in the shape of earth etc. each outer sheath being ten times thicker than the one enclosed by it, is swimming within You like an atom along with countless millions of eggs. Hence You are spoken of as infinite (अनन्त). In whose one portion this tattva, named Ananta remains. is Ksīrasāgara or Tripādvibhūti Tattva—एतावानस्य महिमाऽतो ज्यायांश्च पूरुष

Visṇu is also reckoned one among the twelve Ādityas.

1. 'त्रीणि पदा विचक्रमे विष्णुर्गोपा अदाभ्य ।'
2. 'इदं विष्णुर्विचक्रमे त्रेधा निदधे पदम् ।'
3. 'विष्णुरुरुगायो विचक्रमे महीं दिव पृथिवीमन्तरिक्षम् ।'

According to above quoted Vaidika Mantras some Ācāryas say that the sun is Visṇu. Śakapūṇi, a great Nairukta Ācārya affirms that the sun pervades the earth, sky and heaven with his rays; or he subdues the Pṛthivī, Antarikṣa and Dyuloka assuming the shapes of fire, lightning and sun respectively. It is त्रेधा विचक्रमण (triple overcoming) of the sun

Ācārya Aurṇavābha says that Sūrya Nārāyaṇa sets his feet on Udayagiri in the morning, upon Antarikṣa at noon and on Astācala in the evening. Sun is said to be Vāmana, who measures three lokas with his rays.

Mahāviṣṇu's existence becomes quite clear when we take the attributes पर, महत्, बृहत् etc. into consideration, mentioned in the following Vaidika Mantras—

'तत्त्वं नारायणः परः ।'
'नमो विष्णवे बृहते करोमि ।'

There is another name of Visṇu called Vaikuṇtha His dwelling place is also Vaikuṇtha. This name is derived in many ways as referred below—

१. विकुण्ठायाः अपत्यं पुमान् वैकुण्ठः ।
२. कुण्ठति अनया कुण्ठा माया, विविधा कुण्ठा माया अस्येति वैकुण्ठः ।
३. विविधा कुण्ठा गतेः प्रतिहतिः तस्याः कर्ता इति वैकुण्ठः ।
4. कुण्ठं जडं च विश्वौघं विशिष्टं च करोति या ।
विकुण्ठां प्रकृतिं वेदाश्चत्वारश्च वदन्ति ताम् ॥
गुणाश्रयेण भगवान् तस्यां जातः स्वसृष्टये ।
परिपूर्णतमं तेन वैकुण्ठं च विदुर्बुधाः ॥

1 All the living beings are called Vikuṇṭhas and he, who commands over them is said Vaikuntha

2 One who makes the world dull is called कुण्ठा that is to say माया Having various Kunthās or Māyās is said वैकुण्ठ

3 Different Kunthās or restrainings of movement are done by whomsoever, that is called वैकुण्ठ In the beginning of creation, He, who unites the elements of various sorts with each other or checks their motions, is named as Vaikuṇtha

4 The four Vedas name Prakrti as Vikunthā because it makes the frigid worlds specific, with annexation of three Guṇas, the Bhagavān takes birth in that Vikunthā or Prakrti, so the learned persons call Him वैकुण्ठ

Where, there is no Kuṇthā—coldness, inactivity, non-cognizance or Māyā that place should be named as Vaikuṇṭha Being own form of Bhagavān, Vaikuntha, His dwelling place is also called वैकुण्ठ Bhagavān Visṇu has in His hands a conch (शङ्ख) sword (खड्ग) disc (चक्र) mace (गदा) and pestle (मुसल), which are in reality the victory over Avidyā, the instrument for cutting ignorance, the terrible कालचक्र the weapon for destroying irreligious rule and the thing serving as यज्ञाङ्ग respectively He puts a garland of elements on his neck He bears the Kaustubha and Śrīvatsa on His chest in the form of moon and sun Air is His movement and this is also called Garuda Laksmī Devī pervading all the three worlds, is His consort—

अविद्याविजयं चेमं शङ्खरूपेण धारय ।
अज्ञानच्छेदनार्थाय खड्गस्तेऽस्तु सदा करे ॥
कालचक्रमिदं घोरं चक्रवद्धारयाच्युत ।
अधर्मराजघातार्थं गदां धारय केशव ॥

भूपत्वमेतत्परमं यज्ञाङ्गं मुसलं तथा।
मालेयं भूतमाला ते कण्ठे तिष्ठतु सर्वदा॥
श्रीवत्सकौस्तुभौ चेमौ चन्द्रादित्यौ विधारय।
मारुतस्ते गतिर्वीर गरुत्मान् स च कीर्तितः॥
त्रैलोक्यगामिनी देवी लक्ष्मीस्तेऽस्तु सदा प्रिया।

—Vārāha Purāna 31 15-18

The rays of the feet of that Mahālaksmī by whom Bhagavān Visnu is powerful, who is His base, seat, dwelling place or पुर in which He resides, so that He is called पुरुष—पुरि शेते इति पुरुष may remove our darkness of ignorance

प्रवालानां दीक्षागुरुरपि च लाक्षारुणरुचां
नियन्त्री बन्धूक द्युतिनिकरबन्धूकृतिपटुः।
नृणामन्तर्ध्वान्तं निबिडमपहर्तुं तव किल
प्रभातश्रीरेषा चरणरुचिवेषा विजयते॥

—Laksmī Laharī 7

Having the disguize of beauty of thy (Laksmi's) feet, this lustre of morning twilight taking away the thick darkness of the heart of men, surpasses whole of the universe It is the teacher of corals redness and commands over the red lights of Lāksā Rasa. It is expert in resembling the redishness of Bandhūka flower



Viṣṇu the Parabrahma, Paramātmā, Puruṣottama

—*Dr D N Shanbhag*

हरिर्यथैकः पुरुषोत्तमः स्मृतः ।

Visnu alone is known as Purusottama (Kālidāsa, Raghuvamsa, III 49)

In this universe, every embodied soul desires to enjoy bliss and happiness None wishes to suffer even a little of misery or sorrow But the confirmed fact of universal experience is that no soul while bound by the snares of this worldly existence gets or can get the happiness desired by him, nor is he strong enough to get rid of the misery and sorrow inspite of trying his best and tiring himself for the same As Bādarāyana Vyāsa points out through his *Brahmasūtra* (II 1 21) "इतरव्यपदेशाद्धिताकरणादिदोषप्रसक्ति" the embodied soul is unable to accomplish what is beneficial and to ward off what is malefic to him When one observes one's life, the worldly incidents and human experiences, one per force realizes that one's birth, death, growth, decay, prosperity, poverty, happiness, unhappiness, and all which affect one's life intrinsically and extrinsically, overtly and covertly are not in one's power and capacities. One very often visualises the truth of the dictum 'Man proposes, God disposes' Everyone becomes a confirmed believer of the aupaniṣadika assertion 'आत्माप्यनीश सुखदु खहेतो' (श्वेताश्वतर I 2) which declares that the embodied soul is not the master of the cause of even his own happiness and misery On observing the world around, he comes to know that the existence, maintenance and other activities of the entire world are going on, because of some unforeseen force This unseen force has been called variously as 'Brahma', 'Parabrahma', 'Ātmā' 'Paramātmā, 'Purusa', Purusottama' and so on by the seers of the Vedas and Upanisads and by the sages who authored sacred and authoritative treatises They discovered and proclaimed the truth viz , the origin *(srsti)*

subsistence *(sthiti)*, dissolution *(laya)*, control *(niyamana)*, knowledge *(Jñāna)* ignorance *(ajñāna)*, bondage *(bandha)* and liberation *(moksa)* of embodied souls, nay, everything of the sentient souls and insentient matter in this universe happens due to this sole agency, that is Brahma. One can note the following scriptural passages in this regard—

1. ईशावास्यमिदꣳ सर्वम्।

This whole universe is indwelt by God

2. एष सर्वेषु भूतेषु गूढोत्मा न प्रकाशते।

(Kathopanisad III 12)

God is dwelling invisible in all beings and hence is not manifest

3. यतो वा इमानि भूतानि जायन्ते। येन जातानि जीवन्ति। यत्प्रयन्त्यभिसंविशन्ति। तद्विजिज्ञासस्व। तद् ब्रह्मेति।

That from whom these beings are born, by whom when born they live, into whom they go and dissolve, desire to know that, that is Brahma

4. एष सर्वेश्वर एष सर्वज्ञ एषोऽन्तर्याम्येष योनि. सर्वस्य प्रभवाप्ययौ हि भूतानाम्।

(Māndūkya I 6)

He is the overlord. He is Omniscient He is the Indweller He is the source of all He is the origin and dissolution of all beings.

5 अहं कृत्स्नस्य जगतः प्रभवः प्रलयस्तथा ॥
मत्तः परतरं नान्यत्किंञ्चिदस्ति धनञ्जय।
मयि सर्वमिदं प्रोतं सूत्रे मणिगणा इव ॥

(Gītā VII 6,7)

I am the Creator and the Destroyer of the whole universe There is nothing else, O Dhanañjaya, higher than Myself All this is woven upon Me, like rows of pearls upon a thread

6. पिताहमस्य जगतो माता धाता पितामह·।

(Gītā IX 17)

Of this world, I am the Father, Mother, Nourisher and Grandsire

7. सर्वस्य चाहं हृदि संनिविष्टो मत्त· स्मृतिर्ज्ञानमपोहनं च।

(Gītā XV 15)

I dwell in the heart of all From me come memory, knowledge ratiocinative faculty

8. ईश्वरः सर्वभूतानां हृद्देशेऽर्जुन तिष्ठति ।
भ्रामयन्सर्वभूतानि यन्त्रारूढानि मायया ॥

(Gītā XVIII 61)

O Arjuna! God is seated in the heart-region of all beings He turns round all beings as though mounted on a machine, by his Māyā or mystic power

9. जन्माद्यस्य यतः । (ब्रह्मसूत्र I 1 2)

That from which the origin of this universe occur, is Brahma

We have galaxy of gods or deities and pertinent question may be asked—"Which god can be claimed as Brahma, Parabrahma, Ātmā, Paramātmā, Purusa, Purusottama and so on?"

Śrī Madhvācārya, who flourished from 1238 to 1317 A.D and who propagated Dvaita Vedānta based on the overall supremacy of Lord Visnu, answers the question emphatically—'ब्रह्मशब्दश्च विष्णावेव' (ब्रह्मसूत्रभाष्य I 1 1) It means "The term Brahma primarily denotes God Visnu alone " It implies that all other synonyms of the term Brahma-viz , Parabrahma, Ātmā, Paramātmā, Purusa, Purusottama, Īśa, Īśvara *etc* , all denote only Lord Visnu And this answer of Śrī Madhvācārya is based on scriptural and other evidences The scriptures proclaim—

1. अग्निर्वै देवानामवमो विष्णुः परमः । तदन्तरा सर्वा अन्या देवता. ॥ (एतरयब्राह्मण I 1)

Agni (Fire-god) is the lowest and Visnu is the highest among gods Between them come all other deities

2. देवतानां संगतानामुत्तमो विष्णुरासीत् ।

(आश्वलायनश्रौतसूत्र IV 2 3)

(In the assembly of gods, Agni is the lowest and Visnu the highest)

3 उत्पत्तिस्थितिसहारा नियतिर्ज्ञानमावृति. ।
बन्धमोक्षौ च पुरुषाद्यस्मात्स हरिरेकराट् ॥
अज्ञाना ज्ञानदो विष्णुः ज्ञानिना मोक्षदश्च सः ।
आनन्ददश्च मुक्ताना स एवैको जनार्दनः ॥
बन्धको भवपाशेन भवपाशाच्च मोचकः ।
कैवल्यद. परं ब्रह्म विष्णुरेव न सशयः ॥

(स्कन्दपुराण)

That Being, from whom proceed the origin, subsistence, destruction, control, knowledge, ignorance, bondage and liberation (of this universe) is Hari (Viṣṇu) the overlord Visnu bestows knowledge of the ignorant, liberation to the knower and bliss to the liberated He alone is Janārdana Visnu alone binds with fetters of mundane existence and He alone is the liberator from them He grants absolute bliss. He is the Highest Brahma There is no doubt about it

4. द्रव्यं कर्म च कालश्च स्वभावो जीव एव च ।
वासुदेवात्परो ब्रह्मन्न चान्योऽर्थोऽस्ति तत्त्वतः ॥

(Bhāgavata II 5 14)

O Sage! in reality there is nothing higher than Lord Vāsudeva neither Matter, nor Action (Destiny) nor Time, nor Innate Nature, nor the embodied soul

5 द्रव्यं कर्म च कालश्च स्वभावो जीव एव च ।
यदनुग्रहतः सन्ति न सन्ति यदुपेक्षया ॥

(Bhāgavata II 10 12)

Matter, Action (or Destiny), Time, Innate nature and embodied soul exist only by His (Viṣṇu's) grace and cease to exist when He ignores them

6 नामानि सर्वाणि यमाविशन्ति तं वै विष्णुं परममुदाहरन्ति ।

(भल्लवेयश्रुति)

That Lord is said to be Visnu whom all the words by their connotation declare

7 परं पदं वैष्णवमामनन्ति ।

(Bhāgavata II 2 18)

Lord Visnu is declared to be the highest abode

8. नारायणपरा वेदा देवा नारायणाङ्गजाः ।
नारायणपरा लोका नारायणपरा मखाः ॥
नारायणपरो योगो नारायणपरं तपः ।
नारायणपरं ज्ञानं नारायणपरा गतिः ॥

(Bhāgavata II 5 15,16)

Nārāyana (Viṣṇu) is the goal of the Vedas, gods have sprung from Nārāyana's limbs All worlds have Nārāyana as their goal All sacrifices are meant to please Nārāyana Nārāyana is the

ıltımate object of all Yoga (Yogıc-performances) All penance ıs o vısualıse Nārāyana All knowledge ıs dırected to know Nārāyana All paths lead to Nārāyana

9 स विष्णुराह हि। तं ब्रह्मेत्याचक्षते।

(दैवीमीमांसासूत्र)

That Vısnu saıd—He ıs called Brahma

10 अनात्तत्वादनात्मान ऊनत्वाद्गुणराशितः।
अब्रह्माणः परे सर्वे ब्रह्मात्मा विष्णुरेव हि॥
स हि सर्वगुणैः पूर्णः तदन्ये तूपचारतः॥

(Quoted by Kāsī Ācārya ın hıs gloss on Nyāyasudhā)

As all other deıtıes are not ındependent they are not theır own masters As they are not full of vırtues they are not reckoned ın the category of Brahma Vısnu alone ıs Brahma and Independent, because He alone ıs full of all vırtues Others are called Brahma secondarıly

11 ओमिति ब्रह्म। ओ नामा भगवान्विष्णुरधिकोच्चगुणत्वत.।

(Quoted ın तैत्तिरीयोपनिषद्भाष्य by श्रीमध्वाचाय)

'Om' ıs Brahma 'Om' ıs Lord Vısnu as He alone ıs full of excellent qualıtıes

12 वर्जित. सर्वदोषैर्यो गुणसर्वस्वमूर्तिमान्।
स्वतन्त्रो यद्वशाः सर्वे स विष्णुः परमो मत·॥

(परमापनिषद् Quoted ın जिष्णुतत्वविनिणय of श्रीमध्वाचार्य)

Lord Vısnu ıs devoıd of all defects He ıs the embodıment of all vırtues He ıs Independent and all are under Hıs control He ıs acclaımed as the Hıghest

What are the other evıdences whıch corroborate Śrī Madhvācārya's assertıon that Lord Vışnu alone ıs Brahma, Parabrahma and so on? Fırst we have the etymologıcal evıdence It ıs a fact that the etymologıcal meanıngs of both 'Brahma' and 'Vısnu' establısh that both the terms denote Supreme God or the Hıghest Beıng —

(1) वृहत्त्वाद् ब्रह्म * poınts out that Brahma ıs all-pervadıng

* 1 वृहत्त्वाद् वृहणत्वाच्च तदब्रह्मेत्यभिधीयते। (विष्णु पु॰ III 3 72)
2 वृहत्त्वाद् वृहणत्वाच्च ब्रह्म। (शिव पु॰ I 9 37 मोर पु॰ 41 45)

व्यापकत्वाद् विष्णुः । वेवेष्टि व्याप्नोति इति विष्णुः । †

assert that Visnu is all-pervasive There are also other etymological interpretations given by others (A) Brahma, (B) Visnu

But the problem of the identity between the two denotations arose because of the less number of hymns devoted to Visnu in the Rgveda In this connection the warning sounded by Aurobindo deserves attention "The importance of the Vedic gods cannot be measured by the numbers of hymns devoted to them or by the extent to which they are invoked in the thoughts of the

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3 वृहत्वाच्च स्मृतो ब्रह्म । (कूर्म पु॰ 48 6)

4 वृहत्वाद् वृहणत्वाच्च भावाना सकलाश्रयात् ॥
यस्माद्धारयते भावान् ब्रह्म तेन निरुच्यते ॥ (लिंग पु॰ I 70 16)

5 ब्रह्म परिवृढ सर्वत । (निरुक्त 1 8)

† 1 विष्णुर्विशतेर्वा व्यश्नोतेर्वा ॥ (निरुक्त, 12 18)

2 गतिश्च सर्वभूताना प्रजाना चापि भारत ।
व्याप्तौ मे रोदसी पार्थ क्रान्तिश्चाभ्यधिका मम ॥
अधिभूतनिविष्टश्च तदिच्छुश्चापि भारत ।
क्रमणाच्चाप्यह पार्थ विष्णुरित्यभिसहित ॥ (महाभारत 12 341-343)

3 विष्णुर्विक्रमणादेव । (महाभारत 5 68 3)

4 विभुत्वाद् विष्णुरुच्यते । (कूर्म पु॰ 48 11)

5 विष्टब्ध यत्त्वया सर्व जगत्स्थावरजङ्गमम् ।
जगद्विष्टम्भनाच्चेव विष्णुरेवेति कीर्त्यसे ॥ (मत्स्य पु॰ 248 40)

6 विश प्रवेशने धातुस्तत्र स्नुप्रत्ययादनु ।
विष्णुर्य सर्ववेदेषु परमात्मा सनातन ॥ (वराह पु॰ 72 5)

7 विश्व प्रजायते वस्तु समवैति च तत्र हि ।
प्रस्नोति च सदा सद्भ्य पुरुषार्थ चतुर्विधम् ॥
वे सचेश्च स्नुहेश्चैव विष्णुर्धातुत्रयान्वयात् ॥ अहिर्बुध्न्यसहिता 52 45)

8 विपिश्च व्याप्तिवचनो णुश्च सर्वत्रवाचक ।
सर्वव्यापी च सर्वात्मा तेन विष्णु प्रकीर्तित ॥ (ब्रह्म पु॰ ब्र ख 17 16)

9 वेवेष्टि व्याप्नोतीति विष्णु । विषेर्व्याप्त्यभिधा-
यिनोनुक्प्रत्ययान्तस्य रूपम् । देशकालवस्तु-
परिच्छेदशून्य इत्यर्थ ।
"अन्तर्वहिश्च तत्सर्वं व्याप्य नारायण स्थित "
इत्यादिश्रुते । विशतेर्वा नुक्प्रत्ययान्तस्य रूप
विष्णुरिति ।
—शङ्कराचार्य, विष्णुसहस्रनामभाष्य

Rsis, but by the functions which they perform[1] " As Dr B N K Sharma rightly states, "In the opinion of modern scholars, however, Visnu occupies but a subordinate position in the Vaidika pantheon. He is lauded in far fewer hymns than addressed to other gods like Varuna, Indra and Agni 'He is celebrated in not more than five whole hymns (sūktas) and in part of another and his name occurs only about a hundred times altogether in the Rgveda' (Macdonell Vedic Mythology, p-37) In a large number of short passages, He is introduced just as one among a crowd of divinities from which he is in no way distinguished Further, the *R V* contains numerous hymns in which the Rsis ascribe to Indra, Varuna and other gods, the same transcendental attributes and functions as to Visnu The verdict of modern historical scholarship based on statistical evidence is not, thus particularly favourable to Visnu But it is conceded that 'his personality there, is, at the same time, more important than would appear from the statistical standard alone' (Macdonell, Vedic Mythology, p 37)[2] A B Keith remarks "It would be impossible to deny to Visnu the position of a great god in the period of the Rgveda[3] "

After examining pertinent evidences, Dr B N K Sharma concludes—"From the beginning, then, Visnu appears to have been marked out for a great future The opening line of the *Aitareya Brāhmana* of *R V* 'अग्निर्वै देवानामवमो विष्णु परम । तदन्तरा सर्वा देवता' bears testimony to the fact that by the close of the Rgveda-period, Visnu had definitely come to be accepted as the head of the Vaidika Pantheon No wonder that he had earlier attained to a position of such warm affection in the hearts of the seers as to be thought of and mentioned in terms of high regard in Monotheistic circles I 164 36 Monotheism is the acknowledgement and worship of the one true God It implies a denial of other gods at any rate of their jurisdiction over the cosmos[4] "

Now turning to the Rgveda we do come across such statements

1 On the Veda Pondicherry 1956 p 394
2 History of the Dvaita School of Vedānta and its Literature Delhi, p 7-8
3 The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanisads, Delhi, p 109
4 Op Cit p 8

as the following—

(1) यद्विष्णोः परमं पदं सदा पश्यन्ति सूरयः ।

(I 22 20)

Supreme is the abode of Visnu, it is always perceived by the wise or liberated

(2) विष्णोर्नु कं वीर्याणि प्रवोचम् ॥ (I 154 1)

Who can reckon up the (unimaginable) glories of All-pervading Visnu

(3) विष्णुर्गोपाः परमं पाति पाथः प्रिया धामान्यमृता दधानः ॥

(III 55 10)

Visnu, the All-protector, ever maintains His Supreme nature, always master of infinite powers, powers superb and immortal

(4) परो मात्रया तन्वा वृधान न ते महित्वमन्वश्नुवन्ति ।
उभे ते विद्म रजसी पृथिव्या विष्णो देव त्वं परमस्य वित्से ॥

(VII 99 1)

O Visnu, when You assume Your form in its inconceivable vastness, You become infinitely beyond all bounds None can comprehend Your greatness We know only two regions, You alone know the highest region

There are many more statements extolling the greatness of Visnu

But a modern scholar can simply dismiss them as not sufficient to prove the superiority of Visnu over all other gods, considering them to be cases of henotheism, whereby a particular deity accepted for description is eulogised as the highest, the greatest and the supermost Hence I wish to draw the attention of the interested scholars towards the most famous hymn of the Rgveda viz , the Purusasūkta (X 90)

There is no doubt that in the Purusasūkta, parabrahma or the Supreme God is described The moot question is "Who is this Supreme God" ? The sūkta or the hymn does not mention the name of the God But one can secure some external evidences to arrive at the right conclusion, regarding the Supreme God

Firstly, the word Purusa draws our attention to the oft-quoted three stanzas of the XV chapter of the Bhagavadgītā, (beginning from 'द्वाविमौ पुरुषौ लोके' and ending with 'प्रथित पुरुषोत्तम') In these

stanzas we get the terms Purusa, Uttama Purusa and Purusottama Per force one must equate the Purusa of the *Purusasūkta* with the *Purusottama* of the Bhagavadgītā And Lord Krsna calls Himself to be the Purusottama, the Supreme God In the Bhagavadgītā there are a number of passages which pronounce the verdict that Lord Krsna is the Supreme God Even Śankarācārya holds Lord Visnu or Krsna to be the Purusottama described in the three stanzas referred to above He comments—

अव्यय· कः ? ईश्वर· सर्वज्ञ· नारायणाख्य ईशनशील ॥

Secondly there are statements in the Śatapatha-Brāhmana, which give the name of Purusa as Nārāyana—

(1) पुरुष ह नारायणं प्रजापतिरुवाच । (XII 3 4 1)
(2) पुरुषो ह नारायणोऽकामयत । (XIII 6 1 1)

Thirdly, in the treatise *Rgvidhāna* of Śaunaka, the *Purusasūkta* has been called as *Hari-sūkta*

पुरुषस्य हरेः सूक्त स्वर्ग्यं धन्यं यशस्करम् ।
आत्मज्ञानमिद पुण्यं योगध्यानमिदं परम् ॥

Fourthly, the Śukla-Yajurveda in its chapter XXXI has six *mantras* (17—22) which are stated to be the remaining portion of the *Purusa-sūkta* And it is called as 'उत्तरनारायणीयसूक्त' Mahīdhara, while introducing the seventeenth *mantra*, states—

अद्भ्यः संभृतम् इत्युत्तरनारायणेनादित्यमुपस्थायेति (1 3 6 2 20)
षट्कण्डिका उत्तरनारायणम् ।

This implies that the *Purusasūkta* of the Rgveda consisting of sixteen mantras is the 'पूर्वनारायणीयसूक्त' Hence the Supreme God described in the *Purusa-sūkta* is Nārāyana only

Fifthly, Sāyana the great vaidika commentator also indicates that the deity extolled in the *Purusasūkta* is Visnu While introducing the hymn he states

अव्यक्तमहदादिविलक्षणश्चेतनो य· पुरुष· ।
(व मृ 1 4 1)

पुरुषान्न पर किञ्चित् । (कठ० उ० III 2)
इत्यादिश्रुतिषु प्रसिद्ध स देवता ।

Here while deciding the deity indicated by Sāyana it is necessary to consider that the same *Kathopanisad* in the very

same context declares 'तद्विष्णोः परमं पदम्' (कठ० III 9).

Hence one can conclude on the basis of uncontradictable evidences supplied by various sources that the famous *Puruṣa-sūkta* of the Rgveda is also a Visṇu-sūkta and Viṣnu and none but Visnu is the Supreme God extolled in the Vedas. Rightly has the श्रीविष्णु-अंक of कल्याण (47 1) reproduced the *Purusasūkta as* 'परमपुरुष (श्रीविष्णु) -स्तवन'

Similar is the case with the Brāhmaṇas and the Upaniṣads Both these proclaim the supremacy of Viṣnu. It is well known that *Yajña* or sacrifice was the all-in-all for the seers of the Brāhmanas And by identifying Viṣnu with *Yajña* they admit the over-all supremacy of Visṇu. The very first statement of the great *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* is 'यज्ञो वै विष्णुः' This is echoed at many places [5]

A B Keith rightly observes—"In this account (of the *Śatapatha)* is to be seen the most important factor in the elevation of Visnu to His rank of a most high god, His constant identification with the sacrifice The precise train of thought by which this identification was reached cannot be reconstructed with certainty. it is not to be supposed that Viṣṇu's importance is accidental, or due merely to this identification; He must have been a great god both for the people and the priests before he was given the similitude to the sacrifice, the greatest of all things in the estimation of the priesthood, but his identification undoubtedly sided in the increase of that greatness, and made it permanent and abiding[6] "

When we come to the Upanisads, they too, following the Vedas, proclaim the *parama pada* or the highest abode of Visṇu The following stanza of the *Kaṭhopaniṣad* may be noted—

विज्ञानसारथिर्यस्तु मनःप्रग्रहवान् नरः ।
सोऽध्वनः पारमाप्नोति तद्विष्णोः परमं पदम् ॥

(III 9)

Thus one can note that the supreme Vaidika God is Viṣṇu

5 कृष्णयजुर्वेद III 5 2. शतपथ ब्रा० I 1 2 13 तैत्तिरीय ब्रा० I 2 5 40 ऐतरेय ब्रा० I.15, शाङ्खायन ब्रा० IV 2 among others

6 op cit p 110 111

alone and Śrī Madhvācārya was quite right when he identified Brahma with Visnu who is Parabrahma, Paramātmā and Purusottama Many scholars agree with him—

(1) "There must have been some elements in the original nature and personality of Viṣṇu which definitely made him at one time an all important god "—Dr R N Dandekar, 'Visnu in the Veda' *Festschrift Prof P V Kane,* Poona, 1941, pp 95—96

(2) "While all these circumstances may well have helped to give Visnu the place of eminence to which he attained, there is also significant fact that he was connected from the earliest Vaidika times with a work of deliverance for mankind in distress"–Nicol Macnicol, *Indian Theism,* New Delhi, 1968 p 19

(3) "These combined with the testimony of the post-vaidika literature, which uniformly applies the name 'Nārāyana' as a synonym of the primeval being in the waters, to Viṣṇu, leads Madhva to assume that He alone, had from the beginning, the highest claims to be treated as the Supreme Being of Hindu religious philosophy " Dr B N K Sharma *History of the Dvaita School of Vedānta and its Literature,* Delhi, 1981, p 10.

(4) "Visnu, although he occupied a less important position, from the point of view of number of the hymns (He is praised in only five hymns and his name repeated only about a hundred times throughout the Ṛ V)is yet very important from the point of view of the qualities which he possessed"—Dr A S Tiwari, *Madhva and the Veda—A Study of Dvaita interpretation of Vedic Myth, Ritual and Philosophy,* Ph D Thesis submitted to the university of Poona, 1976, p 29.



Viṣṇu, the Supreme

—Dr C V. Ramadas

1 The object of philosophy is Truth, in that supreme sense in which God and God only is Truth Vedānta is a system of philosophy based on the authority of prasthānatrayī-Brahmasūtras (Vedas) Gītā and Upanisads Śankara, Rāmānuja and Madhva accept these basics but Madhva goes further and considers Mūla Rāmāyana, Mahābhārata Pañcarātra, Sāttvika Purānas in his pursuit of truth All these constitute the bed-rock of his philosophy

1 1 The simplified patent truth that is arrived at by delving deep into all the Śāstras is the truth that the God-head is Lord Śrī Nārāyana, Śrī Hari, Visṇu (synonymous) He is the sole entity controlling the Universe and is responsible for all its activities

1 2 The way to arrive at this basic truth is through Scriptures (Vedas)–the most important source of valid knowledge According to Madhva Brahmasūtras with their irrefutable logic and epitomising Vedas determine the meaning of Scriptures

1 2 1 A careful study of the wide spectrum of Śāstras mentioned furnishes the clue to the central idea

1 2 2 yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante yena jātāni jīvanti'
yat prayantyabhisamviśanti (Taittirīya Upaniṣad)
All āstika matācāryas accept the existence of God as the Creator, Sustainer and Annihilator

Brahma according to Madhva has eight spheres of action, five more than the three mentioned viz., control, bestowing knowledge, causing ignorance, giving bondage (bandha) and bestowing moksa (Skanda Purāna according to Madhva)

1 2 3. Now for identification of Brahma, according to Madhva "brahma śabdaśca visnāveva"

1 2 3 1 brahma śabdah pare visnau nānyatra kvacidisyate·
brahmeti paramātmeti bhagavāniti śabdyate
bhagavān vāsudeveti paramātmeti vai harih
visnuh nārāyanaśceti brahmeti śrutayo jaguh
The term Brahma refers only to Visnu The term Brahma denotes fulness of auspicious qualities (brhantah hi asmin gunāh)–the others are found wanting in this respect The four-faced Brahmā is only by courtesy referred to as Brahmā In its prime meaning, the term refers only to Visnu

1 2 3 2 visnornu kam vīryāni pravoca, yah pārthivāni vimame rajāmsi The four-faced Brahmā can count the particles of Sand, but not Hari's qualities (Rg Veda)

1 2 3 3 prānāvī āmśāśā bhūman visnurvai devebhyo bhūyān tasmāt bhūyonnāma (Chāndogya Upanisad).

1 2 3 4 vede rāmāyane caiva purāne bhārate tathā
ādāvanteca madhyeca visnuh sarvatra gīyate (Harivamśa)

1 2 4 The list is not exhaustive
Visnu's supremacy is established now

1 2 4 1 agnirvai devānām avamah visnuh paramah tadantasthah sarve devāh
The god of fire stands at the lowest and Visnu is the highest In between fall other devatās

1 2 4 2 nāsti nārāyana samam na bhūtam na bhavisyati
None is the equal to Nārāyana now, neither in the past nor in the future

1 2 4 3 That Visnu who is free from all imperfections, who is an embodiment of all auspicious attributes, who is independent and under whose control everything else is, is the supreme Lord (Paramopanisad)

1 2 4 4 "Brahmā, Śesa, Suparna Īśa, Śakra, Sūrya, Guha and others are ksaras (perishable bodied beings). Only Śrī (goddess Laksmī) is aksara Hari is far beyond both" (Skanda Purāna)

1 2 4 5 "Brahmā, Śiva and all others beginning with gods are ksaras Hari is above aksara Laksmī The Lord is infinite in all His glorious attributes like independence, power, knowledge and bliss They are all under His control He, all by Himself, brings about creation, subsistence, regulation, knowledge, ignorance and bondage of all ksaras and liberation of sāttvika souls In aksara, He grants manifestation, subsistence regulation, knowledge and eternal bliss The supreme Hari is the source of activities of all these There is no one else who brings about His birth and so on He is free from all imperfections" (Parama Śruti)

1 2 4 6 "Goddess Laksmī too proclaims: I make him Rudra, whom I want to make Rudra Similarly I make whomsoever I please as Brahmā and a rsi with fine intelligence I take up my bow against Brahmā-hating Rudra to slay him I bring happiness to the people I have free entry to the upper and lower worlds I give birth to Brahmā, so that he is the best But my source is the Lord who abides in the ocean" (Āmbhrnī sūkta)

1 2 4 7 "Moon took his birth in His mind and Sun in His eyes Indra in His face as also Agni, in His breath Vāyu (god of wind) took birth "

1 2 4 8 "Before the universe was created, Vāsudeva alone was there, neither Brahmā nor Śankara, nor Indra nor Sūrya was there, neither Guha, Soma nor Vināyaka" (Śruti)

1 2 4 9 Visnu's position as Supreme is substantiated by Gītācārya in His own words

uttamah purusastu anyah paramātmetyudāhṛtah
yo lokatrayamāviśya bibhartyavyaya īśvarah
yasmātksaramatītohamaksarādapicottamah
atosmi loke vede ca prathitah purusottamah
(BG XV Chapter)

1 2 4 10 "In the case of Vāsudeva origination means just manifes-

tation and nothing else All others like Brahmā have bodies through the actuating force of Śrī Hari The body of Śrī Hari is unoriginated and eternal while Brahmā and others have perishable bodies But the birth of Hari is just manifestation (parama Śruti)

1 2 4 11 Visnusahasranāma and the preamble there of, well establish the supremacy of Visnu

1 2 4 12 The central theme of the Upanisads is 'monotheism' viz , to declare that there is only one independent Supreme God (Visnu) who governs the Real world

1 2 4 13 "vāsudevah param brahma kalyānaguna samyutah" –Śankarācārya in sarvadarśana

1 2 4 14 "brahma śabdena svabhāvato nirasta nikhila doso anavadhikātisayā sankhyeya kalyānagunaganah purusottamo abhidhīyate"–Rāmānuja Śrī Bhāsya-jijñāsādhikarana

Just as the Lord's auspicious attributes cannot be exhausted, so also the quotations cannot be exhaustive His glory of creating, sustaining, regulating, destroying providing knowledge, veiling, binding and releasing are delineated in the Upanisads His immanence and transcendence and His being beyond constraints of time and space and His being Supreme on all counts are emphasised

1 2 5 Madhva's system of philosophy is well supported by the authority of the Vedas (apauruseya) the Smrtis give it the elbow power, Brahmasūtras stand by it, Purānas give strength to it Gītā is its inspiration and itihāsas provide the correct material for its tenets and is fully based on irrefutable logic And jewel of its tenets is Visnu's Supremacy

Śrī Krsnārpanamastu



Culmination of Vaiṣṇava Religion: A Historical Survey

—*Dr J S. Mishra*

Vaisnava or Bhāgavata religion was at its peak of glory and practice in the Gupta age In that period the worship and making statues of Visnu or Narāyana or Nara-Nārāyana was very much popular Since the most of the rulers of that age were Vaishnavites, the more and more blossoming of Vaishnavite literature and architecture was natural Kālidāsa has regarded Nārāyana and Visnu as the same that is, Nara as friend of Nārāyana, therefore Arjuna was Nara and Bhagavān Krsna was Nārāyana

According to Kālidāsa himself, Bhagavān Visnu rests in the bottom of sea on the bed of thousand-hooded Śeṣanāga and, further, his wide-apart feet are glorified in the lap of Laksmī sitting near him He has four arms in which there are glorified, respectively, conch-shell, discus (cakra), club (gadā) and lotus flower (padma) On his breast a gem called Kaustubha is ornamented and nearby is his vehicle (vāhana) garuda, ready for his service [1] Later, according to this description, were fashioned many statues of Visnu lying on Śesanāga Indeed, it is clear that his grandeur is above (the description by) speech and mind In His prayer and worship the same aim of Brahmā, Visnu and Śiva gets fulfilled and therefore, He creates the universe in the beginning, bears and upholds it in the middle and destroys it in the end

On the coins of Gupta emperors, their title parama bhāgvata is inscribed which is proof of their being devotee of Vāsudeva and Vaishnavites Rulers like Candragupta (II), Kumāragupta, Skandagupta were followers of Bhāgavata religion From their coins and contemporary inscriptions, many indications relating to Vaisnava religion are found In Gangadhāra—inscription, Visnu

1 Raghuvamsa 10 7, 8, 6 49, 10 10 10 13

is spoken of as 'Madhusūdana' There is a statue of four-armed Visnu at Udayagiri in Orissa which is of time 400 A D [1] A pillar-inscription of Skandagupta, at Bhītarī under Gajipura district in Uttar Pradesh, mentions statue of Śarngin, for whose worship, etc villages were given in charity [2] In gadhavā-inscription Visnu is called as 'Bhāgavata' The inscription of Junagadha, of the time of Skandagupta (456 A D), describes the construction of Visnu-temple and quotes the divine act of depriving Bali of Laksmī by Visnu disguised as Vāmana by beguiling him [3] It is known from the inscription of the time of Buddhagupta (483 A D), situated at a place called Erana in Sagarā (Madhya Pradesh), that, for memory and honour of Lord Janārdana (Vāsudeva), flag-pillar was constructed It is known also from the iron-pillar of Mehrauli that an emperor Candra by name, got Visnu-Dhvaja constructed[4] In aphsada—inscription, the service of feet of 'Vasudeva's son Mādhava' by Laksmī is quoted

In the Dāmodara-inscription of Buddhagupta, it is described that at the confluence of Kauśakī and Kokā rivers (Nepala), in Varāha area, on a Himalayan peak, temples of Varāha and Kokāmukha Svāmī were constructed Possibly, in the same time, in that area (Varāha) near Dāmodarapura (Dinajapura, Bengal), temples were made in the honour of these two gods The context of construction of temple of 'Varāha–disguised Nārāyana is found in Varāhamūrti and its inscription of the time of Hūna emperor Toramāna, found in Erana [5]

In the Tagāre-inscription of Kadamba dynasty, there is mention of Varāha incarnation The diadem of eastern Cālukyas was 'Garuda' itself, which was competent proof of their being Vashnavites Most of their inscriptions begin with the prayer of

1 Copper's Inscriptionum Indicarem 3 Page 51
2 Ibid, Page 57
3 Ibid, Page 56
4 Ibid, Page 88,22,
Note — In 1980-81, an excavation was carried out there, under the supervision of prof K K Sinha (Banaras Hindu University), in which remains of Visnu temple have been found
5 Ibid, 3, Page 159, bhagvato varāhamūrteh jagat parāyanasya nārāyanasya Śilā-prāsādah

Varāha [1] The most important statue of Varāha-incarnation has been protuberated in colossal form on the wall of the Udaya giri-cave, in which the Varāha-disguised God, protecting the earth, has been portrayed, with very small woman statue (earth) hanging from his teeth Kālidāsa has also quoted such Varāha-disguised God [2]

In his books, Krsna wearing peacock-feathers[3] is also mentioned and there are references to his brother Balarāma (Haladhara)[4] and His wife Rukminī[5]. In various Purānas of Gupta age, there is found clear description of all the incarnations of Visnu

By the decree of Mangaleśa—the emperer of Cālukya dynasty of South—the statues of Visnu and Nārāyana and Varāha and Narasimha have been carved in the cave—temple on a hill[6] Visnu is lying on Śesanāga and Laksmī is nursing his feet The giant Visnu-statues of daśāvatāra of Elorā are elegant signs of celebrity of the contemporary Vaisnava religion Laksmī, nursing feet of Visnu lying on Śesanāga, has been portrayed and Brahmā is lying on the lotus emerged from the navel of God There are also attractive and beautiful statues of Narasimha, Vāmana, Varāha and Govardhana-bearing Krsna

Varāhamihira, in his book 'Brhatsamhitā', has referred to 'Visnu' and 'Bhāgavata'[7] The word 'Bhāgavata', while pointing towards the Bhāgavata sect, also distinguishes the devotees of Visnu

Amarasimha, referring to thirty-nine different names of Visnu in his lexicon-book (Amarakośa), has contended Vasudeva as his father

In the time of Harsa, too, Vaisnava religion was on the path of celebrity with steady pace Bāna has referred to the Pāñcarātrikā

1 The Classical Age Page 422-23
2 Kumārasambhava 6 8 bhuvā mahāvarāhadamstrāyām visrāntāh
3 Meghadūta Page 15 Barheneva
4 Ibid Page 49
5 Mālavikāgnimitra 5 2 visnoh prasahya ca rukminīm
6 Fagurson and Barges Cave temples p 407
7 Brhatsamhitā 60 15

and Bhāgvata sects in 'Harṣa-carita', whose followers used to live in the āśrama of Divākara Mitra[1] Bhāgavata people worshipped Visnu and contended the principle of incarnation Smārta Vaishnavites worshipped Krsna—the Braja-leader, the shepherd and the beloved of Gopīs At many places in Kādambarī, there are references to Krsna The kith and kin of Bhāskara Varmā—a contemporary of Harsa and ruler of Prāgjyotisapura (Assama)–were followers of Vaisnava religion[2]

The celebrity of Vaisnava religion in the Rājapūta age, too, was unabated Multitudinous inscriptions, temples and statues are proof of this reckoning Khalimpura-gift-plate (dānapatra) shows that Visnu was worshipped with chanting of 'Om' Namo Nārāyanāya[3] Occasionally, 'Om Namo Bhagavate Vāsudevāya', too, was chanted[4] Among the paintings of Pahārapura, there, is also a feature of Govardhana-bearing Kṛṣṇa Jayadeva has referred to Rādhā-Krsna sect In the inscription of Pratihāra ruler Bhoja, Visnu has been described as 'Hrsīkeśa' regarding him as the symbol of qualified, Saguna and non qualified, Nirguna[5] In the pre-medieval period too, Visnu was worshipped and respected in society by his thousand names, among which Vāsudeva, Nārāyana, Krsna, Murārī, Ādikeśava, Hari, Mādhava etc , were more popular He was adored very intently by his devotees[6]

Many temples and statues of Visnu were also constructed in this age, which are referred to in the contemporary inscriptions There are many inscriptions in which there are indications to charity of various types given for temples The rulers of Sena-dynasty called themselves as 'Parama Vaisnava' In the Bateśvara inscription of

1 Harsa-carita, ucchvāsa 8, p 236
2 Ibid , उच्छ्वास 7, p 64
3 Epigraphia Indica 16, p 5
4 Ibid 2 p 359
5 Ibid , 18, p 95, om namo visnave yasmin viśanti bhūtāni yatsargasthitīmate sa vah pāyād hrsīkeśo nirgunassagunaśca
6 Ibid , p 107, śesāhitalpadhavalādhara bhogabhāsi, vaksahsthalollasita kaustubha kāntiśonam, śyāmam vapuh saśi virocana bimbacumbi, vyoma prakāsamavatānnara-kadvisovah

the Candela-ruler Paramārdı, there is found reference to Vısnu-temple [1] Under the tutelage of Candela-rulers, many temples were made ın Khaju- raho, among which there were many temples of Vısnu too Few temples of Vısnu are there even now, which sıgnıfy the contemporary Vaısnava-relıgıon-spırıt From Khajuraho- ınscrıptıon, too, there is found proof of the existence of Vısnu-temple[2] Someśvara, the minister of Cedı-ruler Laksmanarāja, got a Vısnu-temple made [3] In the Betam-gıft-plate of Paramāra ruler Bhojadeva, there is a reference to unfurlıng of Vısnu-epıthet, garudadhvaja, which must have been surely on a Vısnu-temple [4] In the tıme of Pāla-ruler of Bengal, Dharmapāla, the tmeple of Nārāyana was constructed[5] In an ınscrıptıon of the tıme of Nārāyana Pāla, there is an ındıcatıon to Garudadhvaja [6] Varıous Vısnu-temples were constructed ın Orıssa, the centre of such temples was Bhuvaneśvara where, ın the twelfth centrury, the temple of Ananta Vāsudeva too, was made

In thıs perıod, besıdes Vısnu-temples, many statues of Vısnu, too, were buılt the statues of Vısnu, wıth conch-shell, dısc, club, and lotus flower ın hands, were constructed ın the tradıtıonal way Such statues are found from Punjab, Harıyana, Uttara-Pradesh, Bıhar, and Bengal In thıs age, reference to Harıhara—Vısnu and Śıva—too is found, that is, the two mutually oppugrant sects, Vaısnava and Śaıva, were posıted together, ın mutually tolerant spırıt Many statues of Lord Krsna, too, were also made ın thıs perıod Along wıth Vısnu's statue, the statues of Laksmī and Garuda were also made In the ınscrıptıon of Paramārdı, Mahālaksmī is ınscrıbed, on whom an elephant offerıng water is portrayed Lıke the coıns of Gupta rulers, on the coıns of Cedı ruler Gāngeyadeva, Candela ruler Kīrtıvarmā and Kāśmīra ruler Dıddā, the paıntıngs of Laksmī are ınscrıbed

1 Harsa-carıta 1, p 211, prāsādo vaısnavastena nırmmıtah
2 Ibıd, p 129,
3 Ibıd, 2,pp 174-77
4 Ibıd, 18, pp 95, 100, 19,p172
5 Ibıd, 4, Khalımpura-dānapatra
6 Harsa-carıta, 2 p 160

The context of the different incarnations of Visnu is also obtained from Historical proofs By the way, few literary compositions of this age also mention the ten incarnations of Visnu. In representative compositions like 'Daśāvatāracarita' written by Ksemendra (eleventh century), 'Gīta-Govinda' by Jayadeva (twelfth century) etc there is vivid description of Visnu's ten incarnations In the Bandogarh (Madhya-Pradesh Near Riwan) inscription of Yuvarāja Deva (tenth century), there is reference to many incarnations of Visnu [1]

In the inscription of a Parmāra-ruler, found from Nagapur, Visnu has been depicted as Matsya like many guises[2] Visnu's Varāha-incarnation became more popular in society, whose various statues started to be made since Gupta age In an inscription of Mevāda (Rajasthan), of the time of tenth century, there is mention of Varāha-incarnation [3] Not only that, many inscriptions of Narasimha-incarnation, too, are found[4] In an inscription recovered from Rajaputana, the Narasimha-incarnation has been beautifully portrayed[5] From Bengal four-handed Narasimha's statue has heen found [6] The statues of Visnu's Vāmana-incarnation are not normally found from northern India In the inscriptions found from Bengal, there are instances of Vāmana-incarnation [7] Not only that, some statues of Paraśurāma, too, have been found from Bengal [8] The great poet Jayadeva has referred Paraśurāma as the Lord of the manifested universe, Jagatpati, and

1 Copper's Inscriptionum Indicarem, 4,pp 184,186,191 Srīyuvarājadevāmātyasya Matsya Kaccha Varāha Parasurātna, etc

2 Epigraphia Indica, 2, Page 182
Vaisvarūpyam samabhyasya mīnādyākrıtı kaitavāt svābhinnanirmitāsesa viśvo Visnuh punātu vah

3 Indian Antiquary, 58, p 161, Harinha nivesito'yam ghatitapratimo varāhena

4 Epigraphia Indica, 19, p 244, 11, p 190, 1, p 124

5 Ibid , 11, p 190

6 Eastern Indian school of Medival Sculptures, plate 45, 46

7 Eastern Indian school of Medival Sculptures, plate 46

8 Iconography in Dhaka Museum, plate 39

head of the attendants of Śiva, Bhrgupati[1] In the Gwalior inscription of Bhoja, Rāma has been described as the incarnation of Visnu[2] Some līlās of Rāma have been portrayed in the paintings of Pahārapura. Arabic traveller Al-bīrūni (11th century) has mentioned Cakrasvāmī (Visnu) of Sthāneśvara (Hariyana) He writes, Tānsera city is considered very much sacred by Hindus The statue of that place is called 'Cakrasvāmī', that is, the Lord of disc [3] In Gujarat, Caulukya ruler Jayasimha Siddharāja got temple of daśāvatāra–the ten incarnations of Visnu–made, which was positioned near Sahasralinga lake [4] His one of the ministers got temple of Ganganārāyana made in Dadhipura [5] An adminsitrative officer of Bhīma (II) got temple of Keśava made [6] Visnu with his seat Garuda is inscribed in the inscription of Pehoā[7] It is known from the copper plate of Gahadvāla that, on the bank of Varunā and Gangā in Kāśī, the temple of 'Ādikeśava' was made [8] This temple is existing even today where devotees visit

In society, many Vaisnava festivals had become popular, references about which are found in purānas and different works. In this matter, inscriptional proofs of Gupta age too, are found In Udayagiri-inscription of Candragupta II Vikramāditya, Śayana Ekādaśī has been referred to, which was celebrated on the eleventh day of śukla paksa in Āsārha month [9] Visnu used to go to sleep on this day and awake on the ekādaśī of śukla paksa in Kārtika,—the day on which he used to awake is called 'Devotthāna Ekādaśī' or Prabodhanī ekādaśī[10]

1 Gīta-Govinda kesavadhrta bhrgupati rūpa jaya jagadīśa hare
2 Epigraphia Indica 18 p 107
3 Mishra J s Eleventh Century India p 185
4 Dvayāsrava Mahākāvya 15, 119, Sarasvatī Purāna 15,5,162
5 Indian Antiquary 10 158, Dohada-inscription
6 Epigraphia Indica 2 439
7 Ibid 1 184-90
8 Tripathi History of Kannauj p 353
9 Copper s Inscrapsonum Indicarem, 3,51, Āsārha māsa suklaikādasyām paramabhattāraka mahārājādhirāja Śrī Candragupta Pādyānudhyātaste mahārāja chagalaga pautrasya mahārāja visnudāsa sanakānikasva mahārāja deyadharmah
10 Indian Antiquary 43, p 193 Devotthānaikādaśyām

It is said in the Gangādhara inscription, that· this day brings gaiety and merriment for all[1] Krsna janmāstami was celebrated on the eighth day of Krsna paksa in bhādrapada [2] Al-bīrūnī, too, has referred to various Vaisnava festivals, among which devaśayanī ekādaśī, Krsna-janmāstamī, devotthāna ekādaśī, Rāma Navamī, etc., are especially famous[3] and augmented, indeed, by the contemporary Indian literature

1 Ancient Indian Inscriptions p 98 Nidrā vyāyāma samaye madhusūdanasya kāle prabudha kumudāgara sudha tāre
2 Select Inscriptions p 382
3 Mishra J S Eleventh Century India pp 196-217



नमो विज्ञानमात्राय सर्वप्रत्ययहेतवे ।
पुरुषेशप्रधानाय ब्रह्मणेऽनन्तशक्तये ॥
नमस्ते वासुदेवाय सर्वभूतक्षयाय च ।
हृषीकेश नमस्तुभ्यं प्रपन्नं पाहि मां प्रभो ॥

Hail to You who are all perfect and possessed of endless potencies, are invested with a body consisting of (pure) consciousness, the Source of all knowledge and the Ruler of all those (viz. the Time-Spirit Karma, nature and so on) that control (the desitiny of) the jīva Salutation to You, the Deity presiding over the intellect (in the form of Vāsudeva), the Abode of all created beings (in the form of Lord Sankarsana, the Deity presiding over the ego-sense, which is the sustainer of all living creation) Hail to You, O Ruler of the senses in the forms of Pradyumna and Aniruddha (the deities presiding over reason and the mind respectively) (Pray), protect me, fallen at Your feet, O Lord

—*Bhāgavata (X 40 29-30)*

देवदेव जगन्नाथ पुण्यश्रवणकीर्तन । यदूत्तमोत्तमश्लोक नारायण नमोऽस्तु ते ॥

My salutation be to You, O Lord of the universe, adored (even) by the gods, the hearing and recital of whose praises brings (supreme) merit, O jewel among the Yadus, O Nārāyana of excellent renown

—*Bhāgavata (X 41 16)*



Aśvattha, The very Embodiment of Lord Viṣṇu as Mentioned in Mahāpurāṇas

—Purna Chandra Ojha

From the days of yore, trees have been playing an important and vital role in human life Tree is the oldest creation of God It renders an indescribable service not only to the human beings but also to the animal kingdom as a whole

Having minutely visualised the Yeoman's service of trees to the mundane world, the human beings have been worshipping the trees, plants, shrubs, roots and grasses with due deference from time immemorial Tree-worship is prevalent in almost all parts of the globe The worship of trees is possibly the earliest and the most prevalent form of religion Particularly the trees and plants play an important role in the myths and customs of India. Tree worship in ancient India is traced back to the primitive age The earliest remnants are traced from the excavation in Mohenjodaro and Harappa, the relics discovered after excavation in Mohenjodaro and Harappa, we come across representation of tree spirits in various forms in different terracotta and seals

In Indian mythology and folklore, several trees and plants have been considered to be highly sacred Different types of vows and festivals related to the trees and plants are practised by different people of the plains and hills differently. Most of the trees like Aśvattha (ficus religiosa) Bilva (Aeglemormelos), Palāśa (Butea Foodesa), Khadira (Areca catechu), Aśoka (Joresia Asoca Roxb), Śamī (Propis Spicigera Minosa Sura), Udumbara (Ficus Glomerata), Vata (Ficus Bangalenes), Nimba (Azdirachra India), Tulasi (Ocimum Sanctum) etc are associated to different gods and goddesses of Indian mythology The association of trees with gods is due to their most usefulness towards the animal kingdom as marked by different savants differently in this field

Particularly in Visnu Sahasra Nāma, Lord Visnu is described as the very embodiment of imposing trees like Udumbara, Aśvattha, Aśoka, Nyagrodha etc Lord Jagannātha, one of the incarnations of Lord Visnu, the state-God of Orissa is verily associated with the wood of Nimba We know Kadamba is called the Play-Tree of Lord Krsna Lord Visnu is very fond of the leaves of Tulasī Nothing is more favourite of Lord Visnu than the leaves of Tulasī Other trees, plants, flowers etc given below are associated with Lord Visnu and they come in use in His worship —

Flowers like —

Acacia furnesiana, Bakhinia variegata, Cananga odorata, Clitoria Terratea (Blue), Guettarda Speciosa, Hiptage bangalensis, Jasminum sambac, Nelumbo nucifera (red), Nyctanthes arbor-tristis, Stereospermum suaveolens, Monochoria Vaginalis

Leaves like —

Artemesia abrotanum, Calophyllum inophyllum, Evolvulusal-sinoides, Ocimum Sanctum

Besides these, other fruits, roots, grasses etc , like bananas, coconuts, oranges, mangoes, pomegranates, grapes, apples, paddies, wheats, white sandal wood, kuśa-roots, dūrvā-grasses etc are used in the worship of Lord Visnu

Similarly Aśvattha, the Pīpala Tree has been mentioned and said as the very embodiment of Lord Visnu So in Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā, the holy scripture of Hindus, Lord Visnu has told that He Himself is the Tree Aśvattha among other Trees —

अश्वत्थः सर्ववृक्षाणां देवर्षीणां च नारदः ।
गन्धर्वाणां चित्ररथः सिद्धानां कपिलो मुनिः ॥

(Gītā 10 26)

Other Purānas like Padma Purāna (6 8 1 42), Bhavisya Purāna, Uttara Parva (I 72 23) Nāradīya Purāna, Uttarakhanda (52 18) also subscribe such views

In the Mahābhārata, Aśvattha is deified and identified with great gods like Sūrya, Visnu and Śiva

In Skanda Purāna (247,41 42 & 44), Aśvattha is called 'Visnu-

vrksa' because all the parts of this tree have been identified with different names of Viṣnu

In Padma Purāṇa (6 115.25-29), there prevails a nice story regarding the birth of Aśvattha tree by which it has been said as the manifestation of Lord Visnu The story runs as follows —

After their marriage Pārvatī and Śiva were engaged in amorous dalliance in a solitary place Gods were afraid of the terrible consequence Conscious of its terrible consequence, Agni was deputed to break the union. Agni, in disguise of a Brāhmaṇa came to the spot Due to his interference in their union, Pārvatī became furious and pronounced a curse on the gods who plotted against her Due to Pārvatī's curse Brahmā was metamorphosed into Palāśa, Visnu into Aśvattha and Maheśvara into Vata because they were believed to be the chiefs who intrigued together In the same place of other texts it is mentioned in other way that from the pyre-ashes of Jalandhara, the king of demons, the husband of Brndā evolved the trees like Tulasī, Dhātrī, Palāśa and Aśvattha, the very trees related to gods

During his conversation with Nārada, Visnu says that he resides at the root of Aśvattha and having propitiated Aśvattha, one shall not see the terrible realm of Yama, the God of death.

(Vāmana Purāna Saro Māhātmya śloka 138)

Kṛsna, on the eve of His renunciation of the mortal body is said to have meditated beneath the Aśvattha tree The Purānas like Viṣnu Purāna, Vāyu Purāna and mainly the Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa mention that beholding the ways of His own Māyā, 'deluding potency' Lord Krsna sipped the water from the river Sarasvatī and sat down under the foot of a Pīpala-tree (Aśvattha) placing His lotus-like foot on His left thigh, He reclined against a young Aśvattha tree and was full of joy even though he had renounced the pleasure of senses.

Lord Buddha, the light of Asia, one of the ten incarnations of Lord Visnu of Hindu religion, in every inch is associated with the Pīpala tree (Aśvattha) So the Pīpala tree is worshipped with great and high esteem by each and every Buddhist of the World

It has been described by the poets of classical Indian literature

that the leaf of a Pīpala tree bears a close resemblance with the fore part of the body of Lord Viṣṇu and also the colour of the palms and lips of Visnu is just like the colour of the tender Pīpala leaves

Besides this, Aśvattha has been said as the *Tree of the World* (संसारवृक्ष) It has also been said as the *Tree of Ātmā* and the *Tree of Knowledge* In ancient times the sages and saints used to prefer to practise their penance under this umbrella-like and cool breeze-giving-hygienic tree for attainment of knowledge and also for attainment of the atonement from the mire of this mundane world

Lord Visnu is said to be the Lord of Knowledge (Govinda) The tree Aśvattha is also marked as the *'Tree of Knowledge'* So for attaining knowledge and considering the great medicinal, tantric value of Aśvattha, the people of almost all parts of the world, particularly in India adore this tree with great awe deifying it as the very embodiment of Lord Visnu

In fine, it may be concluded that though the Pīpala tree (Aśvattha) has been told as the embodiment of Lord Viṣṇu, still then-this tree is adored as the tree of different gods and goddesses like the tree of Laksmī, Alaksmī, Śani, Sūrya, Manasā and the Trinity (God Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśvara) This tree is also said as the abode of Gandharvas, Apsarās and our demised forefathers Hence we pay our homage to this God-like-tree Aśvattha in our religion



O virtuous lady ! We do not hanker after the empire of the world, or after the kingdom of Indra, the lord of heaven, the accomplishments of *Yoga*, or the position of Brahmā, (the Creator) or even absolution (*Moksa*) or the Supreme Abode of the Lord Our sole ambition is that we may ever bear the fragrant dust of the feet of Śrī Krsna on our foreheads Everything is trivial before the dust of the feet of Śrī Krsna

—*Bhāgavata (X 83 41-42)*



Vaiṣṇava Incarnations

(Mythology in the light of Science)

—Shastri Chandrasekhar

"Thou abidest in all,
Thou art all,
Thou assumest all forms,
Thou art the origin of all,
Thou art the self of all,
Salutations to Thee".

So says Visnu Purāna

After centuries of meditation about the origin of the universe and enquiry into the nature of the ultimate Reality, the ancient seers and sages concluded that Brahmā, Visnu and Śiva The three important gods, represent the three aspects of the one Infinite This was named as Trimūrti about which the mythology says—

"In the form of Brahmā he creates
In the form of Puruṣa he preserves
In the form of Rudra he destroys
So, are Prajāpati's three functions".

Prajāpati is the Lord of living-beings Thus Brahmā is the creator of the Universe and Śiva its destroyer The one who nourishes and protects, is Visnu Preservation of life is the greatest task, therefore it is said—"On account of his greatness he is called Visnu" —Vrhatvād Viṣnur Ucyate

Since the dawn of civilization man has tried to express the mystery of creation worshipping the god of life by different names Thus in time many religious cults appeared Each religion has its own founder who described the God by a new name and gave a code of conduct to follow Every religion has a place of pilgrimage and a religious book The method of prayer, its time and

place all are fixed According to Hindu Dharma such religions are Sampradāya or Matmatāntara and Hinduism has its own share of such Sampradāyas like the old Nātha-panthī or the new Ārya-samājī.

The Dharma discovered by the Indian Rsis and Munis grants freedom to all to follow one's own religion Anybody can worship any god at any time and place, in any manner Because of this in this Dharma, that is founded on tolerance and co-existence, there are believers of one god as well as of many gods, even it has non-believers Amidst the believers of one god there are worshippers of Brahmā, Visnu, Śiva, Śakti (Durgā) and Ganeśa, commonly known as Pañca-Deva Then there are followers of Nirguna Brahma, the unknowable unmanifest and without attributes

Thus there is full freedom to observe, to enquire and investigate so as to discover the Truth the ultimate Reality As this happens to be the approach of Science as well, Dharma also is the Science of self-realizations, of the capacity to be in tune with the Nature, the power of creation By virtue of its not being confined to any particular period of time, it is the eternal, the Sanātana Dharma, the mythology of which opens the secret of life and its evolution as Science does as well in its own way Let us find out the significance of Visnu in relation to the creation of this universe as described by the Indian mythology in the light of modern science

Science says—This creation started with the 'Big Bang' and the expanding universe came into existence In the Milky-way a huge heavenly body on its way came very close to another star, now our Sun, and drew out of it sufficient matter to form the planets and moons in our solar system In due course of time the earth, the home of mankind cooled down enough to get filled with water and thus life started in the ocean

Man belongs to the vertibrate type of living beings The first vertibrates were the fish to appear in water Next came reptiles that moved to the sea-shore Mammals followed later to occupy the land As life evolved a unique being came into existence that

was neither fully grown man nor animal but had characteristics of both Out of this evolved the primitive man who amidst the huge reptiles and mammals was a weak dwarf, yet he took such steps that he dominated over all the other animals to occupy the earth First he took various kinds of tools in his free hand and used them for his benefit Then man organised his activities and formed laws for the welfare of the society With the development of the civilization man followed pursuit of various kinds of Arts and Crafts to make the social life culturally rich This evolutionary process of man thus mentally matured him so that he may meditate and seek answer to every problem arising during the struggle of life Moreover he has to visualise methods to protect life against all odds for all times to come

Before going into what Dharma says about this, let us look at the two mythological pictures often seen in certain religious books One of the pictures shows Visnu as Bāla-Krṣna lying on a floating banyan leaf during Mahā-Pralaya Banyan representing the unity and the eternity, points out that at the centre of nothingness the one eternal seed of creation is present invisibly The other picture shows Visnu lying on Śesanāga, with Brahmā seated on the lotus coming out of his navel This indicates that every creation to come is linked to the previous one Thus whatever is left of the previous creation, i e , Śesa, at the centre of it there is "the urge to protect life", the Mahā-Visnu awaits in Yoga-Nidrā for the lotus of creation to come from within and start the creation a new

These two mythological pictures clearly point out to dissolution or Mahā-Pralaya The one showing Krsna as a child is the state immediately after the destruction of the out-going creation while the other showing fully grown Visnu as Śesaśāyī is the state just before the beginning of the in-coming creation During this period of Mahā-Pralaya there is nothing except Visnu, "the preserving aspect of the Trimūrti" lying dormant. Thus Visṇu is the link to the past as well as the future creation As "the preserver of life" pervades through all creation hence he is called Visṇu, the all pervasive.

Dharma says—The universe came into existence with "Sphota", an explosion liberating energy in all directions In the Ksīrasāgara, the Milky ocean, the abode of Visnu, two huge giants full of vigour approached in such a manner that their collision endangered Brahmā, the creative aspect of the Trimūrti At that critical moment Visnu came out of his passive state and becoming active subdued the two giants One of them was Madhu after whom Visnu was named Madhusūdana Madhu, the sun was given a new life and as the earth was born out of it hence she was called Madhujā The sun described as 'the eye of the world', is the creator, the preserver and the destroyer of the world by the grace of Madhusūdana's presence For this very reason as Āditya is another name for the sun, it is said that "Out of all Ādityas Visnu alone is eternal and mighty " When the earth was ready to conceive life Visnu entered into the ocean and was called Nārāyana, the Lord of water It is said that "the ocean is the womb " Thus life appeared in the ocean and Nārāyaṇa took new forms to nourish and protect it on the earth

According to the Bali-Vāmana myth Visnu covered the sky and the earth in two steps and for the third, He put his foot on Bali's head Thus to describe one who took three great steps to encircle the universe, He was named Trivikrama Now scientifically if we look at these "three steps", we may interpret them as–He, the Lord Visnu first entered the Milky-way, the Ksīrasāgara, and relaxed on Śesanāga It was the state of the vibrant energy in readiness, waiting to take shape

Then a nucleus formed as the life giver Sun, He became the sun Himself— the Āditya—the source and the cause of all life. This was the second step of the creative process, because of which, later the planets including the earth emerged and the basis of life could have a stepping ground

As the third step, He, the Lord Nārāyana took the form of the great oceans–the source of all life on earth.

Mahābhārata also supports these three great steps thus–"when the world had become one ocean and all movable and immovable things had disappeared, all living beings had perished, then the

mighty Viṣṇu meditated in Yoga on the Śeṣa's coil"

"A struggle took place between the two giants and Nārāyana and both of them, Madhu and Kaitabha were subdued by Madhusūdana in honour of Brahmā."

"The earth will support all creation movable and immovable, therefore I enter into existence and save the world—thinking thus Madhusūdana incarnated in the form of a boar, a man-lion, a dwarf and a man"

Thus Visnu, the Trivikrama, after having pervaded the whole universe, evolved life on earth as Nārāyana, the Lord of water He took new forms to nourish and protect life in two ways First as Hari, meaning one whose colour is greenish blue, he covered the entire earth with the greenness of chlorophyll to nourish every other kind of life Secondly as Keśava, meaning one with silky hairs, he took various forms to populate the land

In Mahābhārata as mentioned above only four incarnations of Visnu are indicated They are in the form of a boar, a man-lion, a dwarf and a man, which shows the evolution of man from the group of mammals, the hairy animals Though the number of incarnations vary from four to twenty-four, the myth of Daśāvatāra, of ten incarnations is popular, which in a nut-shell gives the out-line of evolution of man on earth The great poet Jayadeva has beautifully described the Daśāvatāra of Keśava

Matsyāvatāra is the first of the ten incarnations of Visnu, as a fish, the first vertebrates to appear in water. In this incarnation Visnu killed Daityas to save the Vedas This biological fact of evolution of the fish has been linked to the popular legend of the Flood or Pralaya It is said that a fish helped Manu, the ancestor of man to start the creation again and populate the earth after the deluge

After having preserved life as a fish Visnu incarnated the second time as a turtle the Kūrmāvatāra The reptiles had evolved and moved to the sea-shore In this avatāra Viṣnu killed Asur Bhīmaratha to establish Dharma The story of Sāgara-Manthana or the churning of the ocean, so well known to all, is associated with this incarnation to tell us how Visnu in the form of a turtle

helped the Devas to get Amrta, the nectar of immortality out of the ocean

Varāhāvatāra is the state of evolution when mammals appeared on land According to the mythology Viṣṇu took the form of a boar to rescue the earth out of the depths to which She was thrown out by a demon called Hiraṇyākṣa Hiraṇyakaśipu, the brother of Hiranyākṣa was such a tyrant that he tortured his own son Prahlāda, a devotee of Visnu. To save Prahlāda Visnu, killed Hiranyakaśipu as Narasimha, the Man-lion Apart from the legend this incarnation indicates the first appearance of man on earth, though he was more like a beast

In Vāmanāvatāra Visnu, appeared as a dwarf who subdued Bali, the powerful, and took possession of the whole world In evolutionary process there was a time when huge reptiles and mammals occupied the land Amidst them man was a tiny creature yet he succeeded to dominate the world From this incarnation onwards we find the development of man and the progress of civilization After the initial success of man who could stand on his legs and take steps, he used his free hands to hold various kinds of tools for his progress This is Visnu's incarnation as Paraśurāma, the man with an axe, who killed Kārtavīrya, the chief of Ksatriyas As the Ksatriyas had forgotten their duty as the protector of the weak, Paraśurāma attacked and killed them twenty-one times

The next incarnation was as Rāma with a bow and arrow He is said to be Maryādā Purusottama, who not only abides by the rules of the society but also punishes those who harm the social order Visnu's incarnation as Krsna, the Yogeśvara, is to show how a civilization with a complex social structure, even though culturally advanced, needs a strong will to fight for the welfare of humanity rising above one's attachments Rāmāyana and Mahābhārata narrate the great deeds of these two Avatāras who are worshipped throughout India and abroad as well, for they represent the two states of consciousness through which man evolved As Rāma he shows one to follow the only path that is directed by the society, while as Krsna he shows how to choose at a crossing a short but

sure path for the benefit of the humanity beyond one's likes and dislikes

The ninth incarnation of Visnu is a recorded history. Buddhāvatāra indicates the awakening of consciousness which is so acutely needed to solve the problems arising out of the struggle for existence. This was achieved by Gautam, the Buddha, in his life time and such was its impact that Asia in particular and the world in general were deeply influenced by his attitude towards life Buddha, a Śramana, critisised and attacked the Brāhmana way of life prevalent in those days but such is the spirit of Dharma, which is eternal, that truth expounded by him was accepted by the Hindu cult After all it was Visṇu Who revealed Himself in the form of Buddha to save life from violence and cruelty

The last incarnation of Visnu mentioned by the mythology points out to the future of the mankinds. This is said to be as Kalki avatāra which is described as a man on a winged horse holding a sword This symbolises the state of the future man who with the increased outer speed has to be inwardly equally sharp and swift to protect and preserve life, otherwise disaster follows The sword of Kalki is not a weapon like the axe of Paraśurāma but represents the sharpness of mind needed to by-pass thoughts that mostly lead to strife and destruction, and thus establish Dharma, the eternal law It is also said that Brahmā's mighty sword called *Asi* was given in succession to many from Rudra to Manu, the son of Sūrya to maintain law as the rulers of the world, so that life may prosper in harmony and happiness

According to Krishnamurti, the modern mystic, a mutation within the consciousness alone can grant complete freedom to act rightly, then only with the speed of a winged horse can man catch-up with the wave of evolution Man to-day has gained all the external speed possible but has missed the inner freedom, the essence of Dharma The spirit of Kalki, rightly called Visnuyaśa, will lead humanity from the materialistic darkness to the spiritual light to reveal the beauty and the grandeur of Visnu, the Mahāyogī

There is an interesting episode in Visnu Purāna to indicate the significance of Lord Visnu, the Nameless with thousand names Once the God of Death instructed his men not to bring to Yamaloka the followers of Visnu He told them that as the Supreme God, Visnu has appointed him as Dharmarāja to record the deeds of all the living beings and to punish those who act against the preservation and protection of life on earth When the Yamadūtas wanted to know the distinguishing qualities of a devotee of Lord Visnu, Yama, the Death God said that he who worships and follows the path of Visnu, the Lord of Light, Life and Love, and lives according to Varnāśrama Dharma, which is to live as per the mental developmental state, in such a way that he abstains from killings and looting and does not indulge in deceitful activities and is away from worldly stimulants A devotee of Visnu is sympathetic and helpful to all, a friend or a foe His heart is rooted in Him and thus he is capable of feeling the unity of all, hence his life is free from all sins

Indeed the society to-day needs the qualities of Vaisnava to free itself from prevailing violence, corruption and abuse of drugs that make the life of a modern man miserable

The worship of Vāsudeva Visnu is to respect life in all forms Our philosophy has been such that has not only given importance and love to the living, in the present, but even to those that are now extinct Being a part of the developmental process of the evolution each and every aspect is worth worship Śālagrāma is the token of all this Black round stones that are found in the river Gandakī are supposed to represent all the twenty-four forms of Visnu

The ancient Rsis and Pūrvajas used symbols to describe the results of their meditation and realisation, because it is impossible to describe the Anirvacanīya, the indescribable Sanātana Dharma is nothing but the interpretation of these symbols and later commentaries on them, with the single aim to guide mankind to help preserve life and feel the joy of it It is like the banyan tree that goes on producing supporting stems as it grows Though one stem is different from the other yet all are linked

together as one and are pointers to the same 'mūla' that nourishes them Similar is the state of worshippers of Sanātana Dharma, where though the forms are many, the expressions are diverse, the deities are varied, yet all point to the same Almighty, the source and the 'mūla' of them all Since this philosophy is difficult to understand for the common man, simplified stories and mythological anecdotes are given, in our scriptures so as to bind the community and help perform their duties in ritualistic way, that is helpful to others and peaceful to oneself Dharma points to nothing but this—"By holy work verily a person becomes holy "

Even to-day after such an explosion of knowledge that has led us to High-Tech and Bio-Tech achievements the humanity is still suffering from excessive violence and corruption of every kind It is time now for us to explore not the mind but the heart more which has the basic qualities of Visnu Let us interpret these symbols which represent Visnu and his significance in the manifestation of life in the light of our present day understanding The excessive impact of the Western Culture and way of thinking has blocked the natural flow of the Sanātana Spiritual trend of our society and thus created a state of stagnation which leads to decay and towards death To keep it alive and pure let the Dharma flow with new waters of changes for its source is perennial like the eternal snows of the Himālayas Let us move out of our limited pools and puddles to the bank of ever flowing Gangā, the symbol of our culture We all know that Śiva holds Gangā on His head, let us now realise that she comes out of Visnu's toe as well, therefore let us unite at the feet of Lord Visnu and open our hearts to receive his benediction through the Moksadāyinī Gangā

For many, all this may appear as far-fetched imagination because for us, physical seeing is believing For this seeing and acquiring proofs science uses instruments Yet it has not invented an instrument like the brain-mind with its mystic powers So it goes on correcting its believing For centuries science believed in the duality of matter and energy but now it is taking a stand similar to Advaitavāda or Monoism, because they have reached

the duality of matter and energy but now it is taking a stand a point of materialistic end They now have seen that the end product of breaking the matter is pure energy that too which they can only feel, not see Ādiśakti is the only source of manifestation The Sanātana Dharma talked of it when the advocators of science were in their cradles The names used for Visnu and the sequence of his Daśāvatāra described centuries ago synchronise perfectly with the facts of creation and evolution of life given by the scientists of the day. For the spiritual life one has to go beyond the limitations of reasoning, that is limited, to feel the bliss of the One who is beyond all limitations

Talking about Dharma, the 20th Century Yogī, Krishnamurti said, "Religion is the uncovering of that which is most holy, which has no name, which is the absolute truth, the origin of everything "

To-day Wholistic or Holistic approach to life is being recognized in the West which so far emphasised on specialization of parts, the word wholistic recently coined in America, means all embracing, from whole meaning entire, and holy also means whole etymologically Therefore it is said, "Being whole is holy " Again about whole it is said, "Whole is always more than the sum total of its parts " What is that 'more' within the whole apart from the sum total of its parts ? It is Ajñeya, the unknowable That nameless, the origin of everything is called Visnu by the Vaisnavas

The Upanisads say that "the smaller we become, the more miserable we are " For an entirely homogeneous life the attainment of all embracing wholeness is a necessary spiritual dimension Through Science whatever is possible can be achieved in due course of time but the impossible task of living whole (Pūrna) and holy (Pavitra) can only be attained through Dharma This is to be seen by the mystic eye within and realized by the whole heart, the seat of Visnu

This holistic approach may be new to the science but not to the Sanātana Dharma The earliest Vaidika Rsis discovered it in Pūrna and rejoiced singing—

om, pūrnamadah pūrnamidam pūrnātpūrnamudacyate
pūrnasya pūrnamādāya, pūrnamevāvaśisyate

Whole is that whole is this, from whole cometh whole yet whole remains—

Therefore, let us pause for a moment and ponder over what Visnu Purāna said in praise of the Lord of the Universe—

'Salutations to the great Being beyond Name and form Who is realized as One, whole existence '

Om Śāntih, Śāntih, Śāntih



Hear, O thou lady friend of mine, I just saw a wonder in the courtyard of Nanda s house I found there the highest Truth of Vedānta dancing and frolicking in the form of a human child besmeared all over with the dust raised by the hoof of cows

—*Ācārya Sankara*

O Vāsudeva, You are the regulator of creation and destruction, nobody can overcome You You are eternally free, You are Salvation itself You alone exist in these three worlds through all the three phases of time (past, present, future) You are the final refuge of souls O Govinda, through Your grace, I see revealed before me both Your divine essence pervading the three worlds and Your indestructible Form Your head touches the highest heaven, and Your feet pervade the earth Your power is unlimited You exist closing the seven outlets of air, the quarters of the universe are Your hands, the sun your eyes, Your Body resembling the linseed flower in its blue colour and covered by a yellow cloth appears as beautiful as a cloud brightened by the glow of lightning O Highest Purusa, I am Your devotee, I have taken refuge in You for attainment of the desired goal I solicit You to do what is best for me

—*Bhīsma*



he Philosophy of Acintyabhedābhedavāda

—Swarnabha Bhattacharyya

cintyabhedābhedavāda got its first written and systematic osophical moorings in Govinda-bhāsya, a commentary written Valadeva Vidyābhūsana, on the Brahmasūtra of Vyāsadeva Bhagavān Śrī Krsna-Caitanya, the greatest Vaisnava teacher ixteenth century India, is said to be the first exponent and acher of this new trend of Vedantic thought though no osophical work written by him has yet been received Men-, however, should be made here of the fact that, according to ne scholars of the Gaudīya Vaisnava sect, Śrī Caitanya arded 'Śrīmadbhāgavata' as the authentic commentary on the, hmasūtra, and his views and exhortations were in conformity the teachings of it Gaudīya Vaisnava philosophers opine that Caitanya laid the foundation stone of acintyabhedābhedavāda a distinct tenet of Vedānta philosophy, through his various ortations, conversations, and interpretations of Śrīmad-gavata

ater, Śrī Valadeva Vidyābhūsana, a well-renowned Vaisnava olar of Orissa, wrote the commentary named Govinda-bhāsya l, thus built the written philosophical structure of acin-bhedābhedavāda Being inspired by Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī and Śrī vanātha Cakroborty, two great Vaisnava teachers who iated him to acintyabhedābhedavāda, and being revealed by agavān Śrī Govinda in a dream, Valadeva began to write Gov-a-bhāsya

Govinda' etymologically means—'the revealer of the Vaidika chings ' According to Govinda-bhāsya, Brahma or the Ulti-te Reality, mentioned in the Brahmasūtra, is none but Bhaga-Śrī Govinda or Śrī Krsna Gaudīya Vaisnava teachers uphold view that the Vedas are the verbal revealation of Śrī Govinda

Following the tradition of discussing Vedānta philosophy, Valadeva Vidyābhūsana mentioned four 'anubandhas' which are meant to create, through their perusal, a tie of interest in the mind of the readers for the doctrines and teachings explicit in the text These four 'anubandhas' are:—(i) 'Adhikārī' which states clearly the determining characteristics of a person eligible for reading, understanding, and realizing the Vedantic text, (2) 'Visaya' or the subject-matter of discussion, (3) 'Sambandha' which announces the relation between the proposed Vedantic doctrine and the subject-matter discussed in the text, (4) 'Prayojana' which asserts the purpose of the study of the text.

1. Adhikārī—According to Valadeva Vidyābhūsana a student who wished to receive the teachings of the acintyabhedābhedavāda school of the Vedānta philosophy must be 'adhigataveda' i e 'one who has throughly gone through all the Vedas in this birth or in previous ones' Secondly, he should be 'āpātatah adhigatavedārthah' or 'one who has, at least primarily, understood the inner meanings of the Vedas' The third characteristic of such a student is that he should possess 'Viśuddha-citta' or heart purified by performance of duties enjoined for his particular 'āśrama' or stage of life, and of Vaidika sacrifices like 'agnihotra' etc Fourthly, he must be 'nityānityavivekavān' that is to say, he must be able to discriminate between what is perpetual and what are ephemeral Thus he should be averse to everything ephemeral Lastly, he must be 'labdhatattvavit-sanga' which means–he must have somehow come in contact with a 'tattvavit' or knower of Brahma, the Ultimate Reality[1]

2. Viṣaya—The second 'anubandha', visaya, may conveniently be discussed under three heads—(a) Brahma or the Supreme Reality, (b) Jīva or the individual, and (c) Jagat or the world

Before discussing about viṣaya, a few characteristics of this school of Vedānta philosophy deserve special mention According to acintyabhedābhedavāda, Reality consists of five categories (Padārthas), namely—Īśvara or the God, Jīva or the

1 Govinda-bhāsya, I 1 1

individual, prakrti or the nature, kāla or time, and karma or action Among these Īsvara, Jīva, Prakrti, and Kāla are eternal, whereas karma alone is a transitory category Karma is material in nature and is often called by such names as 'adrsta' or 'niyati' It is anādi or beginningless, though subject to destruction (Vināśaśīla) All karmas of the individual are destroyed with the attainment of his liberation (mukti)

(a) **Brahma**—Acintyabhedābhedavādīs (the adherents of acintyabhedābhedavāda) regard Śrī Krsna as Brahma or the Absolute Reality mentioned in the Brahmasūtra He is the cause of this universe and is endowed with pure and innumerable attributes (gunas), and with unthinkable and immeasurable powers (Śaktis) He is 'saccidānandavigraha'—that is to say sat (absolute Existence), cit (absolute Consciousness) and ānanda (absolute Bliss) constitute Him or His self He is all-pervasive, devoid of origin and destruction, qualified with eternal knowledge and bliss, completely independent of, and untouched by, any terrestrial attribute Even entering into the phenomenal powers, He independently creates the world, and guarantees for the individual His bhoga (sensuous enjoyments) and apavarga (liberation) [2] He is formless, but wilfully takes various forms through His inscrutable power of māyā in order to please His devotees He or His self (Śrīvigraha) is devoid of internal difference (svagatabheda), such as that which exists between a tree and its branches His Vigraha is the condensed manifestation of Sat, Cit, and Ānanda (Existence-Consciousness-Bliss)

The three chief śaktis or powers of Śrī Krsna are svarūpa-śakti, māyā-śakti, and jīva-śakti [3]

Svarūpa-Śakti—Svarūpa-śakti or the essential power of Śrī Krsna is also known as cit-śakti or the power of consciousness This power eternally exists in Him or His self, and is intimately connected with, the manifestations of Him and His līlās (divine sports) This śakti is also called 'antaranga-śakti' (intimate and internal power) Corresponding to sat, cit and ānanda,

2 Gobinda-bhāsya 1 1
3 Caitanya-Caritāmrta, II 8 116

Svarūpa-śakti, exhibits its three aspects, viz Sandhinī, Samvit, and Hlādinī[4]. By the power of Sandhinī, He upholds His own existence as well as that of others, by the power of Samvit He knows and makes others know, by the power of Hlādinī, He relishes and makes others relish His bliss

Māyā-śakti—This power of Brahma or Śrī Krsna is insentient and material (jaḍa) in nature Thus it is opposed to cit-śakti[5], and cannot work without the agency of Him or His svarūpa-śakti Māyā-śakti is also known as bahiranga śakti (external power) as it cannot touch His internal subjective essence It has two aspects, namely,—'guna-māyā' and 'jīva-māyā' Guṇa-māyā consists of three gunas—sattva, rajas, and tamas, which are material constituents of this phenomenal world Jīva-māyā makes the jīva oblivious of its real self and desirous of sensuous enjoyments that create bondage for it

Jīva-śakti—All creatures, whether human or non-human, are essentially His Jīva-śakti which is also known as tatastha-śakti (marginal or intermediate power) It is included neither in māyā-śakti nor in svarūpa-śakti, but lies midway between them

Svarūpa-śakti is also known as parā-śakti as it is parā (superior) to the other two Jīva-śakti is superior only to māyā-śakti, as the former is sentient whereas the latter is insentient in nature

Brahma is both saguna and saviśesa (qualified and determinate), because powers and qualities are eternally associated with Him But, the different upanisadic texts describe Him as 'nirviśesa' and 'nirguna' in the sense that His eternal qualities or determinants are all derived from His svarūpa-śakti and not from His māyā-śakti[6] This implies that He is nirguna and nirviśesa from the mundane stand-point, but saguna and saviśesa from the metamundane stand-point

According to the school of acintyabhedābhedavāda, Brahma assumes, from time to time, different forms (rūpas) of incarnations (avatāras) for the sustenance of all the worlds (lokas)

4 Ibid II 8 118 119
5 Ibid, I 5 51
6 Visnu Purāna I 12 69

and for spiritual teachings of beings in them These incarnations are of three types.—(1) amśāvatāra (incarnation as part of His svarūpa-śakti), (2) gunāvatāra (incarnation as manifestation of His three gunas), and (3) śaktyāveśāvatāra (incarnation manifested under the influence of His Jīva-śakti) Amśāvatāras, again are of two types, viz purusāvatāra (incarnation as inactive witness), and līlāvatāra (incarnation as sportive one) Ksīrodaśāyī (laid in the Great ocean of Milk) Nārāyana and Kāranārnavaśāyī (laid in the great Ocean of cause) Nārāyana are two of His purusāvatāras Incarnations as Matsya (the Great Fish), Kūrma (the Great Tortoise) etc are His līlāvatāras The deities like Brahmā, Visnu, and Śiva etc are gunavatāras of Śrī Krsna Rsis (seers) like Sanaka, Sanātana, Prthu, Vyāsa etc are regarded as Śaktyā Veśāvatāras

Śrī Śrī Laksmīdevī, the parāśakti of the supreme Lord, expresses Herself as līlāsahāyikā (associate of sportful exploits) with every incarnation of the Lord Śrī Krsna

This sahāyikā-śakti may be manifested as Lakṣmīs, Kāntās, and Mahisīs

As viewed by the scholars of acintyabhedābhedavāda, Śrī Krsna is both the material (upādāna) and the efficient (nimitta) cause of the world, as for example, spider is both the material and the efficient cause of its web

(b) Jīva—Acintyabhedābhedavāda holds that the Jīva or the individual creature is the aparā śakti of Brahma, not identical with the latter, constitutes only one part of Him, an infinitesimal (anuparimāna), knower and knowledge in essence, devoid of origin and destruction and hence eternal, a doer (Kartā) and an enjoyer (bhoktā), characterised with terrestrial qualities, i e endowed with sattva, rajas, and tamas, dependent on Paramātman (God) and the eternal servant of Him[7] Being cit (consciousness) in nature the Jīva cannot be differentiated from cit-svarūpa Brahma Māyā-śakti cannot separate the former from the latter But as śakti, jīva is different from Brahma who is śaktimat (the possessor of śaktis) Moreover, as amśa (part) jīva

7 Gobinda-bhāsya II 1 II 3, and III 2

differs from amśī (the possessor of parts), Brahma Again, however, this bheda (difference) cannot be pushed too far, since Brahma is 'svagatabhedarahita' or indivisible between parts and the whole This shows abheda (identity) between the jīva and Brahma The relation between the jīva and Brahma, therefore, according to acintyabhedābhedavāda, is one of unimaginable (acintya) difference-and-identity (bhedābheda) In this context it is worth mentioning that the jīva or jīvātmā does not possess svarūpa-śakti of Brahma, and hence it is considered His vibhinnāmśa (differentiated part) as distinguished from His svāmśa (own part) possessing svarūpa-śakti

(c) Jagat or the universe—We have already noted that Brahma or the supreme Reality creates the universe, and transforms, simultaneously, Himself into the universe This He does with the help of His insentient māyā-śakti which, in itself, does not possess any creative power, and remains originally in an equilibriated state of three gunas which are the fundamental constituents of the universe But Māyā begins to act as a creative agent when Brahma desires for creation, and accordingly casts a look (īksanam) at māyā, and thereby transfuses His creative power into the latter Though He causes, and is transformed into, the universe, He remains unattached to the latter and to its direct cause māyā, for His svarūpa-śakti does never undergo any change or transformation But here, it should be noted that unlike the Śankara school of advaita Vedānta which holds māyā as the cosmic illusion, the acintyabhedābheda school admits reality of māyā and her product, the universe To the latter, therefore the transformation of Brahma into the universe of multiplicity is not illusory, but real, though transitory The universe temporally originates from Brahma, subsists in Him, and also terminates in the same

With the agency of māyā-śakti and jīva-śakti, the abode of adrsta (destiny), Brahma is the material cause, and with the agency of parā-śakti or svarūpaśakti He is the efficient cause, of this universe. Though the material cause of the universe, is subject to continuous real modification, Brahma as the efficient

cause remains immutable for ever[8] As sunlight is not tainted even if it falls on a filthy substance, the sentient look (īksanam) of Brahma, the efficient cause, on māyā, does not become attached to the latter This pure look only disturbs the equilibriated inactive state of māyā or prakrti, and makes the latter prone to producing the effect, i e the universe[9] Then there appears the subtlest prakrti called 'aksara' or 'avyakta' Out of this aksara gradually evolve the grosser and grosser elements due to permutation combination of sattva, rajas, and tamas, in different proportions Thus 'mahat' (the Great) 'ahankāra' (the great Ego) 'manas' (the Great Mind) 'Pañca mahābhūtas' (five subtle elements) 'indriyas' (the sense organs and the motor organs) and 'pañca sthūlabhūtas' (five gross elements, viz ether, air, fire, water, and earth) evolve one after another

Sādhya-sādhana—A few words about sādhya-sādhana are necessary for the proper understanding of the practical religious import of the school 'sādhya' means the summum bonum or the highest goal of a sādhaka or spiritual aspirant, and 'sādhana' refers to the way to its attainment According to acintyabhedābhedavāda, liberation is the summum bonum of jīva or the individual But 'liberation', here, does not mean complete merging, as viewed by the non-dual vedantist, of the individual with the Non-dual Supreme Reality Śrī Caitanya asserted Krsna-prema or selfless love for Bhagavān Śrī Krsna as the ultimate aim of one's life A sādhaka should exclusively aim at the loving service for Śrī Krsna This highest attainment on the part of a jīva is known as 'prāpti' (attainment of the Supreme Reality as the dearest and nearest one) Liberation from māyā is regarded as only incidental to this prāpti

The school of acintyabhedābhedavāda also recognises four types of liberation, for those sādhakas who fail to attain this highest kind of Krsna-prema. A sādhaka who aspires after Śrī Krsna's aiśvarya (divine grandeur and mightiness), attain in mahāvaikuntha, the dhāma (abode) of Nārāyana, any of these

8 Gobinda-bhāsya, I 4
9 Ibid, II 3

four kinds of mukti (liberation), viz sārūpya (the same appearance as that of Nārāyana), sāmīpya (vicinity of Nārāyana), sālokya (residence at the same abode with Nārāyana), and sārsti (aiśvarya similar to that of Nārāyana)

In his Govinda-bhāṣya, Valadeva has asserted that by dint of yajña (sacrifice), dāna (charity), tapasyā (penance), Śama (tranquillity), dama (control of external motor and sense organs), uparati (self-settledness), śraddhā (faith), samādhāna (complete concentration), bhakti (devotion), jñāna (knowledge), vairāgya (dispassion), a sādhaka becomes able to have *a direct vision of* Śrī Bhagavān

Though Karma (selfless work), yoga (psychic control), jñâna (discriminatory knowledge), and bhakti (devotion)–all these four disciplines have been recognised as ways to God-realization, but none, unaided by bhakti, can serve the purpose Bhakti however, is efficacious without the help of the other three. Here 'bhakti' denotes devotional practices, such as worship (arcanā) of God, chanting (sankīrtanam) of His holy names (nāmas) and attributes (gunas) etc , and meditation (smarana) These items constitute sādhana-bhakti, i e devotion of a sādhaka at a lower stage of practice When this bhakti is mixed with karma, yoga, or jñāna, it turns into miśra-bhakti (mixed devotion) But when bhakti exclusivly attempts at the loving service of Śrī Krsṇa, it is regarded as 'Kevalā' or 'śuddhā' (pure bhakti) Śuddhā bhakti is the highest and the rarest mode of bhakti, which brings about prāpti, the supreme goal of the jīva This śuddhā bhakti, according as the mental dispositions of sādhakas vary, *may* manifest through four distinct bhāvas (modes of concentrated mind), namely-dāsya (loving servantship with the Lord), sakhya (friendship with the Lord), Vātsalya (loving parenthood with the Lord) and madhura (amorosity for the Lord) Of all these four bhāvas, madhura is considered to be the paradigm of śuddhā bhakti

3. Sambandha—Sambandha or relation between what the sūtra (Brahma-sūtra) text implies and what its commentary asserts is the third 'anubandha' of the Vedānta philosophy Śrī Caitanya told Śrī Rūpa and Śrī Sanātana, his two famous disciples, that 'Krsna'

is the proposed sambandha Philosophically speaking, however, the sambandha, in acintyabhedābhedavāda, is one of pratipādya-pratipādaka (determinable-determinant) Govinda-bhāsya is claimed, by the exponents of acintyabhedābhedavāda, to have determined or rationally established the implicit meanings and principles of the Brahma-sūtra

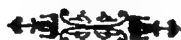
4. Prayojana or purpose—The Vedānta philosophy refers to moksa or liberation as the highest purpose to be served by it Acintyabhedābhedavāda, however, as a distinct Vedantic tenet characterises this moksa as Krsna-prema or Kṛsnaprāpti Renouncing the gross physical body constituted of five gross elements, the siddha (successful) sādhakas with their sūksmaśarīras (subtle bodies) are borne by deities named Arcirās etc ,to Brahmaloka (the highest abode attainable) through devayānamārga, and attain Para-Brahma (the Supreme Reality)[10] These emancipated souls become omniscient and enjoy all the Godly attributes[11] 'But they do not possess the power to create, sustain, or destory the universe They get rid of the distressful cycle of repeated births and deaths, and relish for ever the nectar of Krsna-prema



मधुरमधुरमेतन्मङ्गलं मङ्गलानां
सकलनिगमवल्लीसत्फलं चित्स्वरूपम् ।
सकृदपि परिगीतं श्रद्धया हेलया वा
भृगुवर नरमात्रं तारयेत् कृष्णनाम ॥

The Name 'Krsna' is sweeter than the sweetest sound, the best among auspicious things, the best fruit of the creeper like Śrutis This Name, if uttered only once through reverence or even indifferently, can deliver anyone from worldly bondage

—*Haribhaktivilāsa*



10 Govinda-bhāsya, II 4 , IV 2, IV 3
11 Ibid, IV 4

Viṣṇu and Vegetation
(In the Paurāṇika Tradition)

—Dr (Mrs) Sindhu S Dange

Visnu in the *Rgveda* is a minor deity and the mythology regarding Him distinctly points out that he is viewed as the wide-striding aspect of the solar deity His epithets *viz* , *urugāya, urukrama, tredhā vicakramānah* and the three steps taken by him can be taken into account in this regard Dandekar however feels that Visnu was indeed the god of fertility and productivity and as such he must have been regarded as most eminent in the popular religion of the masses [1] The Vaidika poets could not, however, completely ignore him They, therefore, sought to transform the basic character of Visnu The hieratic Vaidika poets understood the bird-form of Visnu as indicating not the fertility-god but the sun-god [2]

Though Visnu appears as a minor deity in the *Rgveda,* he is seen to gain importance in the Brāhmana-texts and comes to be identified with the very Yajña (sacrifice) The oft-repeated statement *viz Visnur vai yajñah* found in the Vaidika ritual texts brings out that Visnu is now being identified with the very spirit of creation or generation, as does the sacrifice stand for That the sacrifice is connected with the vegetation, also is brought out by a ritual-tale which comes as an *arthavāda* The *Śatapatha Brāhmana* (I 2 3 6,7) mentions that at first, the gods offered up a man as the victim When he was offered up, the sacrificial essence went out of him It entered successively into the horse, the ox, the sheep and then the goat It then entered into the earth They searched for it by digging

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1 Dandekar R N *Vedic Mythological Tracts*, Delhi, 1979, p 87
2 *Ibid*, p 88

They found it in those two *viz*, the rice and barley The sacrificial cake *(purodāśa)* is prepared out of these two. The *Śat Br* (I 2 3 8) explains how the sacrificial cake could be viewed as a sacrificial victim and says that this is the completeness which they call 'the five-fold animal sacrifice'

It is to be marked that the account given in the *Śat Br*, as noted above, mentions 'digging' and not 'ploughing', the latter practice coming into being from the Neolithic times Prior to that, it was a practice of digging the land with a wooden hoe [1]

Visnu—the solar deity of the Rgveda—is completely identified with the sun in the Brāhmana-texts Thus the severed head of Visnu becomes the sun as is related by the *Śat Br* (XIV 1 1 1-10) That the sun is regarded as the divine fructifier of the earth is clearly brought out by many a Vaidika fertility-ritual[2] Thus in the Vaidika tradition itself, there is ample evidence to show that Visnu is associated with vegetation and fertility-rites Gonda J has dealt with such data found from the earlier tradition in this work [3]

When we turn to the Purānas, the aspect of fertility and vegetation in the character of Visnu becomes all the more prominent To take, at first, the Śayanotsava (when Visnu is said to sleep for the four rainy months) and the Utthāpanotsava (when he gets up after the four rainy months) The *Agni P* (268 2) lays down that each of these two festivals should last for five days The four rainy months are designated by the term Cāturmāsya and are marked by the sleep of Visnu The period starts from the eleventh bright half of Āsādha, when Visnu is believed to sleep and ends on the eleventh bright half of Kārttika, when he is said to get up During this period of Cāturmāsya, all domestic rituals requiring sacrificial performance are to be given up, because as pointed out by the *Skanda Purāna*, during this period, the very Yajñapurusa (Visnu) is Himself asleep and therefore he does not accept the

1 Mrs Dange S S, "The Earth-cow and Prthu s Dart, *Purāna*, Varanasi, Vol XIII, pt 1, January 1971, p 80

2 For details and elaboration see-Dange S A *Pastoral symbolism from the Rgveda*, Poona, 1970, and also by the same author, *Vedic Concept of Field and the Divine Fructification*, Bombay, 1971

3 Gonda J, *Asp... of Early Visnuism*, Utrecht

offerings[1] It is patent that the period of Visnu's sleep for the four rainy months concurs with that of quietude on the vegetation front, inspite of the sprouting up of the seeds, since the full corn can be obtained at the end of that period This shows the predominance of Visnu as the spirit of vegetation because when the former sleeps, even the whole world of vegetation gets into sleep, only to get awakened when Viṣṇu ends his sleep

On the basis of this trait of Visnu, his association with various trees and the Tulasī plant as seen in the Paurānika tradition could be explained well

Thus to take first the Aśvattha (Pippala) tree—The *Skanda P* (II 4 3 38a and c) says that Visnu is the same as the Aśvattha tree and this tree is to be worshipped as Viṣṇu the idol of the latter is not available [2] Especially in the Kārttika month, worship of this tree is enjoined As Visnu is closely associated with the Aśvattha tree, it is interesting to note and it is not surprising that even the semblance of the latter should figure in the worship offered to the sun, who is identified with Aśvattha in the brahmanical ritual tradition. The *Brahmāṇda P* (II 4 38) enjoins that before engaging in the muttering of sacred formula of the goddess Lalitā, one should give offering to the sun in a vessel or ladle shaped like the leaf of Aśvattha The *Padma P* (Srstikhanda 55 16) contains a *mantra*, which identifies the Aśvattha tree with the Bodhisattva and which states that the Aśvattha tree is the resort of Visnu It is worth noting that the mention of the Bodhisattva here is clearly the influence of the concept of Visnu's incarnation as the Buddha Bodhisattva is slightly less in status than the Buddha but spiritually is on par with him The same Purāna (Uttarakhanda 151 2) says that in ancient times, when the demons defeated the gods, the latter entered the trees to save their vital breaths, assuming a subtle form At that time, Visnu took resort in the Aśvattha tree (Ibid 3)

1 *Skanda P* VI 231 85

2 *Ibid* II 4 3 38[a]— *Ibid* II 4 3 38[c]— Also *Skanda P* VI 174 18

To turn to the Vata (banyan) tree—Though the Vata tree ıs associated with Śıva and some goddesses such as Candī, Sasthī, ıt ıs also associated with Vısnu The *Varāha P* (187 15[a]) gives that Vısṇu Hımself says that he resıdes on the Vata tree[1] The *Brahma P* (52 17-19) says that the Vata tree ıs called here Puruseśa (Lord of men ı e. Vısnu) When the whole earth gets submerged ın the flood, at the tıme of deluge, Vısnu as an ınfant ıs saıd to stay on a leaf of the Vata tree[2] At Jagannāthapurī, a Vata tree ıs mentıoned as beıng the form of Vısnu (*Skanda P* , II 2 40 24[ab]) The *Agnı P* (111 13) says that ıf a person dıes at the place. where the Aksaya Vata ıs sıtuated at Prayāga (at the confluence of the rıvers Gangā and Yamunā), he ıs saıd to reach the Vısnupurī It ıs saıd by the *Skanda P* (II 4 3 38) that Vısnu ıs present ın the Bodhı-tree (Vata) and then ın all trees

To turn to Āmalakī—The worshıp of thıs tree ıs enjoıned on the Vaıkuntha Caturdaśī, whıch ıs the fourteenth day of the bright half of Kārttıka when the ıdols of Rādhā and Krsna are saıd to be worshıpped under thıs tree as well as ın the grove of Tulasī (*Skanda P* II 4 12 3, 21,25 68, also *Śıva P* (II 26 3-53) The *Padma P* (Uttarakhanda 47 20-23) and the *Skanda P* (II 4 12 21-23) poınt out that Vısnu ıs belıeved to stay at the root of thıs tree, the manes at the top of ıt and many gods and sages at the branches and on the joınts thereof

The Skanda P (II 1 9 31, also 10 45) mentıons the tamarınd tree to be the resort of Vısnu The same Purāna says that the trees are saıd to be produced from the body-hair of Vısnu

From the vegetatıon-world, apart from the trees, the Tulasī plant ıs saıd to be the most favourıte of Vısnu The name Tulasī ıs explaıned by the *Brahmavaıvarta P* (Prakrtıkhanda 15 14) by sayıng that after seeıng her, men and women are unable to provıde any comparıson for her Hence the knowers of yore call her by the name Tulasī[3] She ıs also called Vrndāvanī, because

1 *Varāha P* 187 15 [a]
2 *Skanda P* III 2 8 17-18
3 *Brahmavaı P* Prakrtıkhanda 15 14
Also see Mrs Dange S S , *Puranıc Etymologıes and Flexıble* Forms—(Some Glımpses), Alıgarh, 1989, p 108 under 'Tulasī' Etymology no 285

she performed penance at Vrndāvana (near Mathurā), as is mentioned by the same *Purāna* (Prakrtikhanda 15 37)

About the birth of Tulasī, the *Brahmavaivarta Purāna* gives two kinds of account According to one account, the goddess Laksmī once tried to settle the quarrel between the rivers Gangā and Sarasvatī So the Sarasvatī cursed her to be both a tree and a river on the earth (Brahmavaivarta P Prakṛtikhanda 6 32)[cd] As Laksmī felt sorry for the curse, Visṇu told her that, on the earth, she should go to the house of Dharmadhvaja, where she would be born as the *ayonisambhavā* (supernatural) daughter of Dharmadhvaja There she would become a tree and also be the wife of the demon Śankhacūda, who was none else than his own part (Ibid 45-46) Then she would be Visnu's wife and would be famous as Tulasī in the world As a river she would be known as Padmāvatī (Ibid 47-48)

The same *Purāna* (i e *Brahmavaivarta)* in its Prakṛtikhanda gives another account It says (Prakrtikhanda 15 30) that Brahmā asked Tulasī to marry the demon Śankhacūḍa, who was formerly a cowherd called Sudāmā, born of Visnu's part but was born as a demon due to the curse of Rādhā The gods, who were harassed by Śankhacūda, later on came to know that as long as Tulasī the wife of Śankhacūda was faithful to him, the latter was invincible Then Visnu decided to seduce her taking the form of Śankhacūda and ultimately seduced her When Tulasī came to know the mischief, she cursed Visnu to become a stone (called Sālagrāma) on the bank of the river Gandakī, which was in effect Tulasī herself [1]

As Visnu is thought to be closely associated with Tulasī, there has been the tradition of performing the marriage of Tulasī with Krsna (Visnu) every year in the bright half of Kārttika The Skanda P (II 4 31 1-20 ff-31) mentions the festival dedicated to Krsna from the ninth to the twelfth bright half of Kārttika, culminating in the marriage of Krsna (Visṇu) with the plant Tulasī Thus the golden image of Krsna (Visnu), adorned with ornaments is to be brought ceremoniously with all pomp and grandeur, accompanied by the beating of drums Then this image

1 *Ibid*, Prakrtikhanda 21 24-103

of Visnu and the Tulasī plant are to be separated by a piece
new cloth and at the close of the day on the Goraja muhūrta (
when the atmosphere is filled with the dust-particles from the
of the cows, returning to the cow-pens after the day's grazin
both are to be worshipped and the Kanyādāna (giving away
bride) of Tulasī is to be performed After this marriage,
should eat all things that had been taboo in the four rainy mon
and they should be offered to the brāhmaṇas

The ritual of marriage of a god with a plant is a unique feat
in any tradition and the marriage-ritual of Tulasī and Kr
(Visnu) clearly brings out the aspects of vegetation and fertilit
the character of Visnu

Apart from the mythological details noted above, the asso
tion of the Tulasī plant with Visnu in the religious rituals
follows The *Padma P* (Uttarakhanda 107 8) enjoins the wors
of Visnu on the completion of a ritual for Visnu at the foot
Tulasī plant The *Skanda P* (II 4 1 47) says that it is merito
to keep awake, praising Hari (Visnu) in the month of Kārttik
a Tulasī-grove or under an Aśvattha tree Hence the devotee
Visnu use the Tulasī-leaves [1] A paste made from the Tulasī-
is also enjoined at the worship of Visnu, according to the *Pad*
P (Uttarakhanda 24.23)[2]

The trees and plants from the vegetation-world are so gre
associated with Visnu that in the cult of Jagannātha (as prevalen
Orissa), the very tree-cult is seen assimilated in the Visnu-Kr
cult The *Skanda P* (II 2 7 56ff, 9 2ff) gives the account
formerly the image of Visnu-Krsna was made from the
Indramani stone, at Jagannāthapurī near the Rauhinakunda an
was known as Nīlamādhava. Once Vidyāpati, the *brāhm*
purohita of the king Indradyumna of Avantī went to visit the p
where Nīlamādhava was installed He saw the image and wante
tell about it to the king Indradyumna But then the image
covered with the golden sand and was not seen anymore L

1 *Padma P* Srstikhanda 58 109-136 Ibid *Pātālakhanda* 91 4-5

Indradyumna got four images prepared from wood and they were of Kṛṣna, Balarāma, Subhadrā and Sudarsana (the disc)

The legendary account in this regard points out that in early ages, Viśvāvasu, a Śabara by origin used to worship Nīlamādhava in the shape of a blue stone in the forest before Vidyāpati, the *brāhmana* minister of Indradyumna, the king of Malawa, could find him out with the help of that Śabara It is also stated that the Śabara could show this favour only at the request of his daughter Lalitā, who had been deeply in love with Vidyāpati When the king Indradyumna appeared on the scene, Nīlamādhava disappeared. But at the behest of Visṇu, Indradyumna later on carved the image of the Lord (Jagannātha) at the place known as Guṇḍicāghara, named after his favourite queen Guṇḍicā.[1] In the process of evolution of Jagannātha, the deity is linked with Krsṇa or Visnu Together with the image of Krsna, there have been the images of Balarāma and Subhadrā and also Sudarśana (the disc)

As seen above the image of the Lord Jagannātha (Kṛṣna-Visṇu) together with those of Balarāma and Subhadrā and Sudarśana are of wood They naturally need renovation or reconstruction after some intervals Thus after an interval of twelve or nineteen years, in the year having two Āṣāḍha months (one regular and one intercalary month), the *Navakalevara* ceremony is observed Thus new images of Kṛṣna, Balarāma and Subhadrā and Sudarśana are prepared of wood and there is a solemn ceremony of shifting the Brahmapadārtha (the immortal life substance) from the old images to the new ones at the time of *Navakalevara* (new body) ceremony The wood of the tree is thought to be very essential on one more occasion and that is the famous Car Festival As this Festival was initiated by the queen Gundicā, the festival is believed to be named after her According to tradition, three Gundicā Yātrās are observed The two Yātrās are performed inside the temple complex But the last

1 Dhal U N, 'Ratha Yātrā'—A Sacrificial Festival of Lord Jagannātha *'Sacrifice in India-Concept and Evolution,* ed by Mrs Dange S S, Aligrah, 1987, p 178

and the most colourful Gundicā Yātrā starts on the second day of the month of Āsādha and continues for nine days outside the temple [1]

Every year three new chariots are constructed for the [illegible] of the Lord Prior to the collection of wood of the trees from the forest, for the construction of chariots and for [illegible] images at the time of *Navakalevara* ceremony, there [illegible] the Vanayāga (forest sacrifice) which is to be [illegible] forest One important ritual customary to [illegible] performed here It is called Ankurāropana [illegible] varieties of seeds for germination, before [illegible] forest sacrifice Five types of seeds viz. [illegible] (paddy), *mudga* (green beans), *māsa* [illegible] (sesamum) are sown in the containers [illegible] towards the north-east direction of the [illegible] the seeds germinate, they are offered [illegible] *homa* begins The fire kindled with the [illegible] Vaisnava fire The Acārya considers [illegible] imagines the presence of Laksmī in the [illegible] eight offerings of clarified butter and [illegible] are offered in the fire Offerings ([illegible] black beans) are given to various de[illegible] the construction of the chariots are [illegible] flowers [2]

The importance of wood (of [illegible] details regarding the cult of Ja[illegible] assimilation of the two cults viz. [illegible] of Krsna-Visnu worship Th[illegible] above indicates the aspect of [illegible] easily find a place in the [illegible] aspect

Thus Visnu [illegible]

1 *Ibid*, p 180
2 *Ibid*, pp 1[illegible]

the solar deity in the Rgveda, having some fertility-rituals to his credit in the brahmanical tradition, is seen to emerge as a deity closely associated with trees, plants and vegetation in the Paurānika tradition and can be said to be the god of fertility on the basis of this later tradition



I seek the presence of Śrī Krsna, who is the concentrated Love of the Milkmaids of Vrndāvan, who is the fortune of the Yadus personified, who sums up in His person the hidden treasures of the Upanisads, and who may be called a coloured representation of the all-pervading *Brhma*

—*Śrī Rāghava Caitanya*

बहूनां जन्मनामन्ते ज्ञानवान्मां प्रपद्यते ।
वासुदेवः सर्वमिति स महात्मा सुदुर्लभः ॥

In the very last of all births the enlightened soul worships Me, realizing that all this is God Such a great soul is very rare

—*Gītā VII 19*

अनन्यचेताः सततं यो मां स्मरति नित्यशः ।
तस्याहं सुलभः पार्थ नित्ययुक्तस्य योगिनः ॥

Arjuna, whosoever always and constantly thinks of Me with undivided mind, to that Yogī ever absorbed in Me, I am easily attainable

—*Gītā VIII 14*

अव्यक्तोऽक्षर इत्युक्तस्तमाहुः परमां गतिम् ।
यं प्राप्य न निवर्तन्ते तद्धाम परमं मम ॥

The same Unmanifest which has been spoken of as the Indestructible is also called the supreme Goal that again is My supreme Abode, attaining which they return not to this mortal world

—*Gītā VIII 21*



Prostration to Viṣṇu

—Jankinath Kaul 'Kamal'

I have heart, could I lay it at Thy altar!
I have mind, could I place it at Thy feet!
I have intelligence, could I seek Thou with it!
I have ego, could I merge it in Thee!
O Blessed One! all-pervading and all-embracing!
Break my bonds and I am Thou—
In the clear vision of Reality,
This is my humble prostration

Delusion hinders and sets asunder—
The whole—Source and Force—
To innumerable births and deaths
Would this wailing and wandering,
This fretting and fuming
Cease altogether and calm prevail
Through Thy grace, unhindered
This is my real prostration



Viṣṇu and His consort Lakṣmī-Significance in everyday life

—R N Lakhotia

Among the Hindu gods and goddesses the most important place is occupied by Lord Visnu or Nārāyana who is also regarded as the main manifestation of 'Brahma'. His consort or Śakti goddess Laksmī is considered as the most important goddess responsible for bestowing prosperity, wealth and worldly pleasures on the devotees Even the two famous avatārs namely, Rāma and Krsna are also considered to be the avatārs of Lord Visnu only Hence, it is very essential for the devotees to understand the significance of the 'Saguna Vigraha' of Lord Visnu and his Śakti Laksmī In this article, we have analysed the various facets of Lord Visnu and his Śakti Laksmī with reference to their significance in everyday life for the devotees in particular and other human-beings in general

Let us imagine Lord Visnu in his most well known form He is shown to be having a peaceful countenance, he sleeps over the bed of Śeṣanāga and a 'Kamala', i e a lotus protrudes from his navel He is the supreme deity, he is a supreme God amongst all the gods He is the foundation of the earth He is the Lord of goddess Laksmī His eyes are beautiful like lotus and he is the supreme Lord of all the worlds of the universe

If we analyse this picture of Lord Viṣnu, we find that there is a scientific significance attached to this, the proper understanding of which is very useful in our everyday life For example, it is a common knowledge that if anybody finds the presence of a snake in his house he cannot have any peace but Lord Viṣnu sleeps over snake and still is very peaceful This only shows that those who are interested in complete liberation should remain as peaceful and fearless as Lord Visnu Let us now analyse the significance of the lotus protruding from his navel The lotus represents the universe with all the attributes attached therewith, that is, the root Hence, if the root lotus, that is the universe, with its out-worldly qualities is taken out from inside then only a person can be shorn of all worldly attributes which alone would help

a person to attain full peace The 'Sudarśana Cakra' signifies the revolving earth which is continually moving around as per the wishes of Lord Visnu The 'Śankha' represents the words of the Vedas while the 'Gadā' represents strength The whole world receives light from the sun which is represented by 'Kaustubha Mani' which is worn as a necklace by Lord Visnu 'Garuda' is the chief of birds and represents Dharma Hence, those who wish to achieve the divine qualities of Lord Visnu should always keep 'Dharma' as their vehicle and should ride over Dharma only Some persons do wonder as to how Lord Visnu could always be in 'Ksīrasāgara' But it has also got its special significance Excepting certain creatures born out of eggs or insects, most of the creatures live on milk and feed their children on it Hence, if the entire milk which is produced in the world is collected at one place it would immediately assume the form of a Lake Lord Visnu is the sustainer of the universe Hence, he sees to it that sufficient quantity of milk is produced and distributed to all creatures without any difficulty and hence the imagination of Lord Viṣṇu living in 'Ksīra Sāgara' is with this scientific basis It is also quite evident that if some salty thing or some foreign material is mixed in milk it will turn sour which only shows that if the heart is not pure and is full of such vices or foreign materials like passion, greed, anger, selfishness, etc , then the heart will not remain pure but will become sour and the Lord will not remain in such a heart Hence, we have to keep our heart like 'Ksīra Sāgara', otherwise it will become 'Ksārasāgara' (ocean of salt) and the purity of the heart will be spoiled It has been very beautifully said in a Hindu Couplet that the Lord says:'*Mohi kapata, Chala, Chidra Na Bhāvā*' It shows that Lord Visnu likes that heart only which is pure like 'Ksīrasāgara' and is devoid of all 'vikāras' and the 'vāsanās' Hence when we worship Lord Visnu or Nārāyana in this form by understanding the true significance of 'Saguna Vigraha' of Lord Visnu then we try to imbibe the various qualities of Lord Visnu and make our life divine

Most of the Hindu deities are seen with their śakti or consort which only shows the special significance attached to the women folk and proves the fact that they are never considered inferior to

men Even the name of the goddess is affixed first, i e , before the name of the god, like Sītā Rāma, Rādhe Śyāma, Laksmī Nārāyana, Gaurī Śankara etc Hence, we should worship Lord Visnu alongwith His Śakti goddess Laksmī If we however, worship goddess Laksmī alone, then we fail in our aim of true liberation as can be understood from the significance of goddess Lakṣmī accompanying Lord Visnu Let us visualise the picture in which we find goddess Laksmī as massaging and pressing the feet of Lord Visnu People generally do not understand the spiritual significance of this feature of goddess Laksmī and thus fail to derive true benefit from the worship of Laksmī and Nārāyana, that is, Lord Visnu This only shows that through this picture goddess Laksmī is *trying to* explain to us that if we want the special grace of goddess Laksmī then we have to take the shelter of Śrī Nārāyana's feet where Laksmī, the Śakti of Visnu, resides If we want to get Laksmī by force and do not become true devotees of Lord Visnu then we may have to face the same consequences as Rāvaṇa faced who wanted to keep Sītā (Laksmī) by force in his house On the contrary whenever the goddess Laksmī is with Lord Visnu, their 'vāhana (vehicle) is Garuda, who is the embodiment of Dharma but if goddess Laksmī alone is invoked, then she comes on an Owl, who can see only in the night and who fails to see the light of Dharma, i e , the good qualities of the world Hence anyone worshipping goddess Laksmī alone by forgetting Lord Visnu will be riding over Owl only and will not be able to see anything which is divine and can see only in the dark, that is, the world full of all sorts of evil propensities. Hence the worship of Laksmī, the Śakti of Lord Visnu should always be accompanied by the worship of Lord Visnu, then only our life becomes sublime and we can care more for the welfare of the world just as Lord Visnu is the sustainer of the world and thinks only of the good of the world Hence, the special significance of Lord Visnu and His Śakti Laksmī is great in our everyday life and we can reap great spiritual benefit, peace and salvation through the worship of Lord Visṇu along with His consort Laksmī only and should never think or worship Laksmī alone



Lord Viṣṇu—Remedy of our Sufferings

—Dileep Bhatia

We all are suffering in present environment Some of us belong to minimum medium class level and we have all basic requirements The worldly things exist in our homes and in society We are self sufficient and have all resources But, still, internally we are not happy The materialistic things are providing only external comforts Internally, we all are unhappy and dissatisfied The reason is very simple In our tight daily schedules, we do not have time for God We have planned all other activites nicely, but, we have neglected God We try to convince ourselves that we do not have time for Him We manage other activities We entertain guests and visitors We are also prepared for sudden additional responsibilities In same tight routines, we somehow manage all the routine and nonroutine activities, But why have we ignored Him? Let us evaluate and analyse our-selves internally and try to correct this lapse

God exists There is no second thought on this issue The natural activities cannot be regulated and controlled even by great scientists and researchers Nature continues to do its job The sun will definitely rise in morning We can not extend the sun-set time The changing weathers and seasons can not be stopped The full moon-day can not be shifted The nature is not taking rest There are no hindrances and obstructions Humanitarian activities are getting sometimes effected due to various factors and difficulties Sun will never become sick. Sun is present on its scheduled duty on all the days continuously without break Some hidden power is controlling these natural phenomena The same power is named as God Many times, we find difficulties in executing our desires We become helpless By artificial means and provisions we claim that we have achieved

birth-control But there is no control on death The costlie medicines, best experts and specialist doctors can not avoid th death It is said that the poor die because of unavailability c medical care, but, why rich perosns have to die ? They hav enough money and best available doctor will come at their doo step on a single call But, the end time of our life is fixed We ca not succeed in taking and avoiding this phase The will of God ha to be accepted by all of us Whether we worship or not, existenc of God can not be ruled out

The God has many roles The same Almighty God exists i multiple characters *Rāma, Krsna, Śiva, Visṇu, Brahmā,* all ar basically God Depending upon our family traditions, importanc of various festivals and religious days in the year, we worshi these gods *Lord Visnu* is one of them Visnusahasranāma i very powerful remedy for our problem Viṣnu-Cālīsā is simplifie and short prayer Importance of both these can be judged b following these by self-worship

The morning prayer must be our daily-routine Dependin upon our business, service, life and domestic liabilities, we mus spare few minutes at least for God Fixed daily routine wi provide us lot of energy Internal peace, satisfaction, happines are additional results The devoted worship brings wonderfu results God always gives us It is our misunderstanding tha Almighty is doing injustice with us and he is troubling us This wi never happen Lack of trust, confidence and efforts results i negative results If we surrender ourself in feet of Lord Visnu then, all our worries and problems will be automatically solved

Lord Visnu loves us He takes care of us He is our guardia and patron We are guided by Him He is unique and wort worshipping We should not demand anything from Him H knows our requirements and fulfils them unsought We should d our part Just worship Him and leave else at His disposal Rest i His job He will see His part Visnu is great We must respect Hin and follow His teachings

Regular and devoted worshipping will reduce our suffering gradually We must have stamina and patience Time is th

biggest factor Many persons have wonderful positive experiences by Visnu Sahasranāma Its path (recital) does not take much time Our tensions, and strains are continuing These are increasing day by day We ourselves have to find out the way for ease and becoming comfortable Survival and existence is becoming difficult Situations, circumstances and environment are worsening day by day For normal routines, more efforts and extra energy are needed Consumption of energy is more Hence, this must be replenished Whatever time can be spared and whenever it can be spared, this should not go sheer waste This time should be fruitfully utilised in Visnu worshipping We must have definite goal and aim Slowly and gradually, time period must be increased in this direction We ourselves, will feel quite satisfied by this act Let us experience ourselves

Mahātmās and Saints have their own path and experiences Vedas and Purānas also tell lot of stories and teachings Simple worship without any demand is the best remedy for our sufferings Let us start it today itself Lord Viṣnu is ours and will remain ours We must trust him. Our prayers and worships will definitely reduce our sufferings



एवं कृष्णे भगवति मायामनुज ईश्वरे ।
वैरेण पूतपाप्मानस्तमापुरनुचिन्तया ॥
कामाद् द्वेषाद्भयात् स्नेहाद्यथा भक्त्येश्वरे मनः ।
आवेश्य तदघं हित्वा बहवस्तद्गतिं गताः ॥

Just so, many got purified of their sins through hatred towards Lord Śrī Krsna, who appeared as a man, and became one with Him through constant thought of Him As through Devotion just so through desire, hatred, fear, and friendship, many centred their minds on Him, destroyed their sins, and got to His way

—*Bhāgavata (VII 1 28-29)*



Meditation on Bhagavān Viṣṇu

—Jayadayal Goyandka

On the lotus of the practicant's own heart, or on a thousand-petalled red lotus in front of him a little above the ground, stands Bhagavān Visnu heightening the beauty of the lotus by His presence The colour of His body resembles that of the rainy cloud, all His limbs are exquistely beautiful and adorned with ornaments of various kinds A heavenly odour emanates from His Divine Body Wearing a serene look His moon-like face is brimming with beauty He has four long and beautiful arms His neck and rosy cheeks are exceptionally beautiful and captivating, an enchanting smile adorns His face, His ruddy lips and aquiline nose are simply enthralling Crocodile-shaped ear-rings adorn both his ears The chin is most beautiful to look at His large and beautiful eyes resembling a pair of lotuses are two perennial founts of compassion, love, tranquillity, equability, knowledge, bliss and light The shoulders are a bit elevated A piece of fine silk of golden hue is wrapped round His blue Body and presents a beautiful contrast with it The Śrīvatsa mark (a golden streak) adorns His breast, which is the abode of Laksmī the Goddess of wealth Of His two right hands, the upper one bears the bright Disc, and the lower one holds the celebrated mace, Kaumodakī Similarly, the upper left hand holds the large white conch named Pāñcajanya, which ever brings victory to Him, while the lower left hand has a beautiful red lotus A necklace of jewels adorns His neck, and a garland of sylvan flowers with leaves of the Tulasī plant interspersed with them, the vaijayantī garland and the diamond known as Kaustubha playfully hang on His breast, His feet are adorned with white bejewelled anklets making a jingling sound,and the head with a brilliant diadem His broad, elevated and bright

forehead bears the beautiful mark known as 'Ūrdhvapundra' (consisting of two vertical lines joined by a curved line at the base) His wrists, arms, waist and fingers are adorned with bejewelled bangles, armlets, zones and rings respectively. His dark, curly hair is most beautiful to look at A brilliant lustre surrounds His form,—a lustre as bright as the light of myriads of sun appearing together and yet cool,—and throws out infinite currents of love and bliss



Keśava is most pleased with him who does good to others, who never utters abuse, calumny, or untruth, never covets another's wife or another's wealth, and who bears ill-will towards none, who neither beats nor slays any animate or inanimate thing, who is ever diligent in the service of the gods, of the Brāhmaṇs, and of his spiritual preceptor, who is always desirous of the welfare of all creatures, of his children, and of his own soul; in whose pure heart no pleasure is derived from the imperfections of love and hatred The man, Oh monarch, who conforms to the duties enjoined by scriptural authority for every caste and condition of life, is he who best worships Visnu there is no other mode

—*Visnu Purāna*

नमस्ते देवदेवेश शङ्खचक्रगदाधर। भक्तेच्छोपात्तरूपाय परमात्मन् नमोऽस्तु ते ॥
नमः पङ्कजनाभाय नभः पङ्कजमालिने। नमः पङ्कजनेत्राय नमस्ते पङ्कजाङ्घ्रये ॥

Earth prayed Hail to You, O Ruler of the (very) gods of gods, O Wielder of a conch, discus and mace O Inner Controller of the gods and other beings, my salutations be to You, who have assumed this form in deference to the wishes of Your devotees Hail to You, who have a lotus sprung from Your navel Hail to You, who are adorned with a garland of lotuses !! Hail to You, the lotus-eyed One !!! Hail to You, who are possessed of lotus like-feet !!!

—*Bhāgavata (X 59 25-26)*



Śrī Vaikhānasa School—An Epitome

ज्ञानानन्दमयं देवं·······विखनसे नमः ।

'We worship Bhagavān Hayagrīva, who is full of consciousness and Bliss, Self-illuminating, Pure, effulgent like a crystal and the receptacle of all learnings Obeisance to Bhagavān Brahmā who had proclaimed all the actions enjoined by the Śrutis and Smrtis and who knows the meaning of all the Vedas "

Bhagavān Visnu assimilates the forms of all deities The worship of Śrī Harī procures the merit occuring from the worship of all the deities The object of the worship of all the deities is the realization of Visnu's place The scriptures thus declare—

विष्णुर्वै सर्वा·······अन्या देवताः ।

(Aitareya Brāhmana I 1)

"Visnu is the form of all the deities He is the greatest ruler of all He is the primeval Purusa transcending all the worlds Among the gods Agni is the youngest and Visnu the eldest All other deities occupy their places between them "

सर्वेऽपि वैदिकाचारास्सर्वे·······हरिः ।

(Smrti)

"All the Vaidika rules of conduct, all the sacrifices and penances are the varities of Bhagavān Viṣnu's worship Bhagavān Śrī Harī rewards all the good deeds "

येऽप्यन्यदेवता भक्ता·······यजन्त्यविधिपूर्वकम् ।

(Gītā IX 23)

"O Arjuna ! Although the men who filled with devotion worship other deities with some desire, in fact worship me, yet such a worship by them is only through their ignorance "

These excerpts clarify that Visnu Himself is the greatest deity to be propitiated. This worship of Visnu is divided in two schools from the point of view of the followers (1) Vaikhānasa (2) Pāñcarātra Of these the Vaikhānasa school is founded by the sage

Vikhanā on the line of the teachings of Bhagavān Viṣṇu. For the welfare of the world, Bhagavān Viṣṇu manifested Himself in the form of *arcā* (worship) and produced from a part of His ownself the sage Vikhanā just in order to commence the tradition of the worship of that Arcā form. Thus he taught the principles of Arcā-school. The sage Śrī Vikhanā was the first promulgator of Vaiṣnava Dharma. The sage Vikhanā is Brahmā Himself. Following the will of Viṣṇu, Brahmā assumed the form of Vikhanā in the beginning of creation. Brahmā prepared the Vaikhānasa-sūtra in accordance with the Vaikhānasī school of Yajurveda.

आदिकाले तु भगवान्……सूत्रं महत्तरम् ।

(*Bhārgavasaṁhitāyām*)

वैखानसीं महाशाखां स्वसूत्रं विनियुक्तवान् ।
पद्मभूः परमो धाता नमिषारण्यवासिनाम् ॥

(*Skandapurāṇa*)

That sage Vikhanā abridged the bulk of the sacred lore taught by Bhagavān Viṣṇu and imparted its knowledge to his pupils, Bhṛgu, Atri, Kaśyapa, Marīci, etc. That divine Vaikhānasa lore was again abridged into four lacs of ślokas (verses) and promulgated on the land of Bharata by these sages. The great lores composed by the aforesaid sages, namely Bhṛgu, Atri, Kaśyapa and Marīci are respectively known as Adhikara, Saṁhitā, Kāṇḍa and Tantra. In the Gṛhyasūtra composed by the sage Vikhanā acts of physical purifications have been preached for the worship of Viṣṇu, and the worship of Bhagavān has been enjoined as an obligatory act to be done after the performance of daily offerings of oblation, as it may be seen in the following sentence of that Gṛhyasūtra—

अग्नौ नित्यहोमान्ते……भगवन्तं नारायणमर्चयेत् ।

"At the end of the daily offering of the oblations into the fire daily worship of Viṣṇu must be done. One should worship Viṣṇu with devotion either in [illegible] house or in a temple."

In pursuance of [illegible] given in this sentence [illegible] ding the worship of Bhaga[illegible] one's own house or [illegible] the great sage Marīci [illegible] in his work [illegible] canakalpa" the [illegible] construction [illegible]

installation of an idol, and of various meditations along with the mantras for the worship of Śrī Viṣṇu who is the supreme, the Absolute Brahma, the Highest Light, the Imperishable, immanent in all, the receptacle of all, the eternal supreme Purusa

In the Paurānika as well as in the historic periods, this Vaikhānasa system was followed by all The assumption that this system is meant only for the Vaikhānasas is not correct. The sacred lore expressly declares—

वेदे वैखानसे सूत्रे यो धर्मः परिकीर्तितः।
सर्वैः स धर्मोऽनुष्ठेयो नात्र कार्या विचारणा॥

"The codes of the worship of Bhagavān taught in the Vaikhānasa-sūtra of the Veda are to be followed by all There is no need for discussion "

The *arcā* or worship of Bhagavān is two-fold,due to the difference in purpose, viz Sakāma and Niskāma From the point of view of Sādhanā also it is two-fold, i e.*Amūrta Arcā* (or abstract worship) and *mūrta Arcā* (i e worship of a Form) worship of Bhagavān through the mouth of Agni by offering oblation into fire is *amūrta arcā* The worship by installing an image is *mūrta arcā*

Bhagavān Visnu who is to be thus worshipped by the aforesaid arcā is said to possess five forms, which are well known by the names Visnu, Purusa, Satya, Acyuta, and Aniruddha In accordance with the Vaidika utterance 'this Purusa indeed is five-fold, of five forms (स वा एप पुरुप पञ्चधा पञ्चात्मा) that supreme self Visnu has five forms, namely Para, Vyūha, Vibhava, Antaryāmī and Arcāvatāra

That Visnu who created all the worlds is called Para That Visnu who lies on the milky ocean accompanied with Visvaksena, Garuda and Laksmī etc is known as 'Vyūha ' The incarnations such as Matsya, Kūrma taken up by Visnu on the earth for the destruction of the Rāksasas are called as 'Vibhava'

That Bhagavān, who pervades through the entire movable and immovable world, is called as 'antaryāmī' For the well-being of the worlds, the incarnation of Visnu in the form of

arcā or worship through his idol being efficacious in releasing the creatures is *'arcāvatāra'* The idols of the aforesaid *arcāvatāra* are in the five forms in accordance with the essential nature (or *tattva*) of Śrī Visnu namely Dhruva, Kautuka, Snapana, Utsava and Bali

Of the aforesaid five forms of Visnu, namely Visnu, Purusa, Satya, Acyuta and Aniruddha, Purusa is manifested from Viṣṇu, satya from Mahāvisnu, Acyuta from sadāviṣnu and Aniruddha comes forth from the all-pervasive Nārāyaṇa.

The aforesaid *arcāvatāra* is four-fold–(1) svayamvyakta or self-manifest; (2) Divya or Divine (3) Saiddha or semi-divine, and (4) Mānusa or Human

The image manifested by Bhagavān on His own accord for the protection of the devotees and for showering blessings on them is 'svayamvyakta' The image installed by the deities such as Brahmā and Rudra is *Divya* or divine that which is installed by the siddhas or the semi-divine beings is *Saiddha* and the image installed by men is said to be *Mānusa* or pertaining to men The area of their effulgence is three *yojanas,* one *yojana,* two *krośas* and one *krośa,* respectively

The worship of this Bhagavān is of four types–japa or repeating the mantras, *homa* or offering oblations into the fire; *arcanā* or worship and *Dhyāna* or meditation

Japa—

Having repeated the sāvitrī mantra first, the repetition of the mantras of Visnu and of *mahāmantras* of eight or twelve syllables with mind fixed at Bhagavān is called *Japa*

Homa—

Offering of oblations in the fire for Visnu is Homa

Arcanā—

Worship of Bhagavān with an idol or with other objects either in one's own house or in a temple is *Arcanā* Here the words 'with other objects' may be taken to signify Śālagrāma etc Two types of *arcanā,* namely *Nitya* or obligatory and *Naimittika* or connected with occasions, have already been pointed out. Of these the obligatory or regular *arcā* is performed for the rebase of one's ownself or for the well-being of the people *Naimittika arcā*

is two-fold, 'Śāntika' or propitiatory and 'Pauṣṭika' or preservative Arcanā or worship done for the removal of evils is Śāntika, such as the appeasement of the evil effects of *Adbhuta* or unusual events *Adbhuta,* too, is of three types· *Divya* or divine, *Āntariksa* or related with the aerial regions and *Bhauma* or pertaining to the earth *Divya Adbhutas* include Grahavikāra or changes in the planets, *Grahayuddha* or the clashes of the planets, *anāvrsti* or drought etc *Antariksa Adbhutas* constitute the fall of meteor, Dhūmaketu or appearance of a comet, scene of rainbow at night or the phenomenon of *Rāhu-puccha,* etc *Bhauma Adbhutas* are such as birth against the rules of place, time and nature, weeping, laughing or burning of an idol (Pratimā) and the appearance of an ant hill etc

For the appeasement of these evil omens, special worship, prayer and offering of oblation to Visnu is done in accordance with the prescriptions of the 'Vimānārcanakalpa' The rules of Visnu's worship in accordance with the lore of Vaikhānasa are given with details in such works as the 'Arcanā-navanīta', 'Visnavarcana-sāra-sangraha', 'Bhagavadarcā-prakaraṇa' etc

Dhyāna—

Contemplation of the supreme soul by the individual soul with mind is *Dhyāna* *Dhyāna* or meditation is two-fold *niskala* and *sakala* In the *Niskala Dhyāna,* the supreme soul is contemplated as pervading the entire universe inwardly as well as outwardly just as the *ghee* in milk, oil in sesamum and the fragrance in a flower *Sakala Dhyāna* is of two types *saguna* and *Nirguna Nirguna Dhyāna* is almost identical with the *Niskala Dhyāna*

The ultimate aim of the aforesaid worship of Bhagavān is the attainment of release, which is the highest goal of human life That emancipation is obtained only after the deliverence from *māyā* or illusion produced by Bhagavān One can be released from this *Māyā* after taking refuge in Bhagavān and only by dint of his compassion

This *Moksa* or release is of four kinds—sālokya or living in the same place, sāmīpya or nearness, sārūpya or obtaining similar form and sāyujya or unity The lokas or regions of Visnu are of

four kinds, viz Āmoda, Pramoda, Sammoda, and Vaikuntha, which are situated one upon another. Bhagavān ruling in these four regions is called Viṣṇu, Mahāviṣnu, Sadāviṣnu and the All-pervading Nārāyana The attainment of the aforesaid Āmoda is 'sālokya', that of Pramoda is sāmīpya, that of sammoda is sārūpya and likewise the achievement of Vaikuṇṭha is said to be sāyujya or union. All of these are immune from rebirth

आब्रह्मभुवनाल्लोकाः पुनरावर्तिनोऽर्जुन ।
मामुपेत्य तु कौन्तेय पुनर्जन्म न विद्यते ॥

(Gītā VIII 16)

"O Arjuna ! all the *lokas* upto that of Brahmā lead to rebirth, but O son of Kunti ! After having realized me one is freed from rebirth, since I am beyond time (kāla) while the world of Brahmā and all other *lokas* are limited by time or Kāla and hence non-eternal "

Thus the Vaikhānasa school and arcā (i e worship) of Viṣṇu has been briefly described here The devotees achieve the highest bliss worshipping Visnu in the way pointed out here.

—Adapted from 'Kalyana'



अनन्याश्चिन्तयन्तो मां ये जनाः पर्युपासते ।
तेषां नित्याभियुक्तानां योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम् ॥

The devotees, however, who loving no one else constantly think of Me, and worship Me in a disinterested spirit, to those ever united in thought with Me, I bring full security and personally attend to their needs.

—Gītā IX.22

पत्रं पुष्पं फलं तोयं यो मे भक्त्या प्रयच्छति ।
तदहं भक्त्युपहृतमश्नामि प्रयतात्मनः ॥

Whosoever offers to Me with love a leaf, a flower, a fruit or even water, I appear in person before that disinterested devotee of sinless mind, and delightfully partake of that article offered by him with love

—Gītā IX 26



Dvaitādvaitavāda

Śrī Nimbārkācārya, the promulgator of the system of Dvaitādvaita has put forth the theory of *'Svābhāvika bhedābheda'* According to Śrī Nimbārka *'Bheda'* and *'Abheda'* are not only real equally but are equally eternal also In all the times and under all the circumstances *'Bheda'* and *'Abheda'* are existent equally Śrī Nimbārka says—*Brahma* is the cause, the individual soul (or *jīva*) and the world are the effect, *Brahma* is possessed with power (*Śaktimān*), the world and the individual soul *(jīva)* are the two powers *Brahma* is the all-comprehensive existence, the individual soul and the world are the subtlest parts of *Brahma* The distinction between the Cause and Effect, the power and the powerful as well as between the whole and the part is real, natural and invariable *Brahma* is to be meditated, to be known and the object to be realized *Jīva* or the individual soul is the one who meditates, seeks to know and realizes *Brahma* is the agent of creation, sustenance and dissolution, all-pervading and completely free, whereas *Jīva* is incapable of the act of creation, etc , a mere-particle and the one who is ruled Not only the bounded soul (*Baddha jīva*) but even the released soul (*mukta jīva*) is distinct from *Brahma* This distinction between Brahma and *Jīva* based as it is on their nature and properties (*dharma*) is invariable

Similar is the case in respect with the world *Brahma* is exclusively conscious, sentient, subtle and invariably pure, where as the world is insentient, inactive, gross and impure Therefore there is invariable difference in nature and properties between *Brahma* and the world But just as the natural distinction between *Brahma* on the one hand and the *jīva* (individual soul) and the *jagat* (i e the world) on the other is real, similarly their natural

identity too is equally real Effect is different from its cause in respect with qualities and action, but it is identical in shape or *svarūpa* The cause, too,is different from the effect in so far as it deviates in form from the effect, but it is identical with the effect being inherent in the effect and in respect with the shape *(svarūpa)* of the effect

The jar made of clay is different from the lump of clay, since the shape and action of the jar is different from the shape and action of the lump of clay, but at the same time although being different the jar is identical with the lump of clay since the earthen jar is nothing else than the clay That is to say that the effect is of the nature of cause *(kāranātmaka)* pervaded by the existence of the cause *(kārana-sattāmaya)* and dependent on the cause *(kāranāśrayī)* and hence the effect and the cause are identical

Cause, too,is different from the effect, since numerous other effects can be produced by that cause, just as the earthen jar is different from the lump of clay, for the reason that not only the jar is produced with that lump of clay, but still the lump of clay is different from the jar, since the lump also is a form of clay like the jar itself Therefore the cause is different from the effect so far as it is in the shape other than the effect, but when it is inherent in the effect or in the shape of the effect itself it is identical with effect In *Svābhāvika Bhedābheda*, the word *'bheda'* means (1) difference from the side of effect *(kārya)* on the basis of quality and activity, and (2) from the side of cause, its being other than the effect The word *'abheda'* means (1) being inherent in the effect from the side of effect

Therefore *Brahma* being other than the world as well as different from *jīva* (or individual soul) and *jagat* or the world, is at the same time not different from the *jīva* and the *jagat* in the form immanent in the world

—*Adapted from 'Kalyana'*



Śuddhādvaitavāda *

Śrī Visnusvāmipāda, the exponent of the theory of Śuddhādvaita has accepted Śrī Nṛhari or Śrī Nrsimha deva as his Īśvara The theory of Śrī Visnusvāmipāda has been elucidated in the following verse of the Śrī Śrīdharasvāmipāda's 'Bhāvārthadīpikā' commentary on the *Śrīmadbhāgavata*

"It has been said by Visnusvāmī—

The Saccidānanda form embraced by the Hlādinīśakti or the exhilarating power and the *Samvit śakti* or the power of omniscience is indeed *Īśvara*, whereas the *jīva* or the individual self is wholly covered by his own *avidyā* or ignorance (in the form of beginningless extroversion) and is a conglomerate of the hoards

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* The doctrines of Śrīvisnusvāmī are nowhere met with independently In the name of Śuddhādvaita theory the doctrines of Ācārya Vallabha are quoted who declares himself to be a follower of Visnusvāmī This being the case, a reference to his i e Vallabha's principles becomes necessary

Śrī Vallabhācārya has elucidated his theory in his commentary known by the name 'Anubhāsya' The commentary of Śrīmadbhāgavata, too, follows the principles of Śuddhādvaita itself The theory of Śrī Vallabha differs on the one hand in many respects from those of Śrī Śankara and Śrī Rāmānuja while it betrays numerous similarities with the theory of Madhva on the other According to Vallabha, Jīva is atom *(anu)* and the servant *(sevaka)* The distinction in manifestation or the visible world is real Brahma is *nirguna* (without qualities) and *nirvisesa* (devoid of individual attributes) Brahma Himself is the efficient cause and the material cause of the world The Lord of *Goloka* Śrīkrsna Himself is Brahma He is to be served by the individual soul or *jīva* *Jīvātmā* and *Paramātmā* both are pure This is the reason why this theory receives the nomenclature of Śuddhādvaita According to Śrī Vallabha, *Sevā* or service is twofold—*Phalarūpa* and *Sādhanarūpa* The mental state of listening constantly to Śrīkrsna and thus rendering mental service is *Phalarūpa* while offering things and rendering physical service is *Sādhanarūpa* According to him, having attained the state of Gopī in Vrndāvana which is a mass of the highest bliss and is situated in *Goloka*, serving *Bhagavān* as husband filled with the extreme sentiment in the invariable *Rāsotsava* is *'Moksa'* or Liberation In his opinion the path of knowledge of *Jñānamārga* is meaningless *Bhaktimārga* or the way of devotion, too is not good Only the *Prītimārga* or the path of love is the best of all

—*Editor*

of agonies He who is the controller of *Māyā* or who is the master of *Māyā*, is indeed *Īśvara*, whereas he who is tormented, condemned and damned to suffer or is overpowered by *Māyā* is *Jīva*

Parameśvara or the Supreme Godhead is full of the highest bliss and the *Jīva* in spite of being sentient is the subject of abundant sufferings

Jīva is subjected to the following five agonies or *kleśas* (1) ignorance of its own nature, (2) misapprehension about its nature arising out of that ignorance (3) the consciousness of distinction between its ownself and the other existent objects resulting from that misapprehension, that is to say, such understanding as 'It is I' or 'It is mine' in the objects other than the soul, i e in the body, etc (4) fear arising out of this apprehension of distinction and (5) sorrow

"I bow down to that Śrī Nrsimha Bhagavān whose *Māyā* or power subjects the Jīva to these five agonies "

According to Śrī Visnusvāmipāda—

(1) Liberated persons (purusas) are many
(2) They possess imperishable bodies or the bodies with supernatural faculties
(3) Their service or *bhajana* is incessant
(4) The form of Śrī Hari is eternal, and
(5) Devotion is superior to liberation *(mukti)*

—Adapted from 'Kalyana'



कृष्णाय वासुदेवाय हरये परमात्मने। प्रणतक्लेशनाशाय गोविन्दाय नमो नम.॥

Krsna You have descended on this earth through the agency of Vasudeva You destroy the sins of those who come in contact with You and bring them deliverance You are the Supreme Spirit You exterminate the sufferings of those who bend low before You O Govinda, the protector of cows, we offer our obeisances to You

—Bhāgavata (X 73 6)



Important Pilgrimage Centres and Temples relating to Lord Viṣṇu

Below we are giving an account of the important places of pilgrimage and various temples of Lord Visṇu or his incarnations Lord Rāma and Śrī Krsna are chief incarnations of Lord Visnu. Lord Rāma and Lord Krsna are worshipped practically in every nook and corner of India and also in foreign countries It was good to give details of all such temples, but due to lack of space it is not possible to do so Therefore, only a few important Tīrthas and temples have been described

There is every possibility of some mistakes creeping in this description, so we crave an apology for it from the readers and all other persons concerned

We are grateful to those who have helped us in this compilation

—*Editor*

Temples and Sacred Places in North India Vaiṣṇavī Devī (Kashmir)—

This is a place of great sanctity related with the goddess Vaisnavī, the energy of Bhagavān Visnu At the time of the battle with demons named Śumbha and Niśumbha, the goddess Śrī Vaisnavī was manifested along with the manifestations of Śrī Brahmānī, Śrī Māheśvarī, Śrī Kaumārī, Śrī Vārāhī and Śrī Nārasimhī, and since that time she lives here This place is in a very dark cave 46 miles towards north-east from Jammu The pilgrimage to this place is undertaken during the period called Navarātra

Badarīnātha—

The temple of Śrī Badarīnātha is situated in Chamoli district of Uttar Pradesh, 187 miles from Risikesh and at an altitude of 10500 feet The bus-service available from Risikesh to Badarinatha has made the journey to Badarinatha very convenient for the pilgrims, otherwise it was formerly trouble-some to move on along the hilly tracks The temple of Śrī Badarīnātha stands on the bank of the river Alakanandā. Owing to the great force in the currents and excessive coolness of water it is not possible here to take dip in Alakanandā Very close to the river's bank there is a pond of hot water in which the pilgrims can bathe before entering the temple for worship

Śrī Nara-nārāyana the incarnation of Viṣnu had practised penances at this very place The hill-tops situated on the eastern and western sides of the temple are respectively called by the names Nara and Nārāyana Even a visit of the Badarī regions renders emancipation accessible for a man The place where one and the Eternal, the Highest Soul Nārāyana Himself resides, must be regarded to assimilate all the sacred places, and the entire universe itself

The image of Śrī Badarīnātha is made of Śālagrāma stone It is in the posture of meditation and possesses four arms It is said that for the first time the gods installed this image taking it out from the Nāradakunda of Alakanandā. The divine sage Nārada was the first to be entrusted with the charge of the worship of Lord at this temple Thereafter when the Buddhist became powerful they established their authority here and kept on worshipping taking the image of Śrī Badarīnātha for that of Buddha When Śankarācārya began to attack the followers of Buddhism, the Buddhists of this region crossed over to Tibet While leaving this place they threw away the image into Alakanandā When Śankarācārya did not see the image in the temple, he mentally perceived its position through the supernatural power of Yoga having entered into meditation He caused the image to be taken out of Alakanandā and installed it in the temple For the third time the image was thrown into the

Taptakuṇda by the priest of the temple, who left that place having not even a handful of rice to eat, since the pilgrims did not visit that place. At that time somebody in Panḍukeśvara who was possessed by Ghanṭākarna told that the sacred image of Bhagavān was lying in the Taptakunda This time the image was caused to be taken out from the pond and was installed in the temple by Srī Rāmānujācārya (some teacher of that school of philosophy)

On the right of Srī Badarīnātha there is the image of Kuber (made of brass) and in front of the same are the image of Śrī Uddhava and the Utsava-image of Śrī Badarīnātha Himself This Utsava-image is worshipped at Joshī-matha during the winter season The *caraṇapādukā* may be seen near the image of Uddhava. On the left is the image of Nara-nārāyana Close to this are the images of goddesses Śrī and Bhū The temple of Laksmī is situated along the passage of Parikramā There is the image of Garuḍa in front of the main temple. The strings of Vanatulasī, the unboiled gram-pulses, coconut fruits and sugar candy are offered to Bhagavān Badarīviśāla. The temple of Śrī Śaṅkarācārya may also be seen on the left side while entering the main temple.

We find here a number of historical places of religious sanctity described with details in the Purāṇas, such as Nara- nārāyanāśrama, Nārada-śilā, Markanḍeya-śilā, Garuḍa-silā, Vārāhī-śila, Nāra-siṁhī-śilā, Kapālatirtha, Brahmatīrtha, Vasudhāra-tīrtha, Pañcatīrtha, Somatīrtha, Dvādaśāditya, catuḥ srsṭa, Brahmakuṇda, Merutīrtha, Daṇdapuskariṇī, Gangāsangama, Dharmaksetra, etc .

Viṣṇuprayāga—The sacred confluence of Viṣṇugangā and Alakanandā is at a distance of 3 miles from Joshimatha There is an attractive temple of Bhagavān Viṣnu here, in which the divine sage Nārada had worshipped Bhagavān in ancient times

Triyugīnārāyaṇa—There is a temple of Bhagavān Nārāyana at the top of a hill in the mountainous path between Kedāranātha and Badarīnātha. Bhagavān Nārāyana is accompanied here with the goddesses Bhū and Laksmī.

Haridvara—Visnughāṭa is the place to the south of the temple of

Avananātha This is the place where Bhagavān Visnu had practised austerities

Bhimagoda—There is a temple in the way leading to Bhimgoda situated on the bank of Gangā The images of the twenty-four incarnations installed here are very attractive

Ṛṣikeśa—Varāha temple and the temple of Satyanārāyana are worth seeing here The Gītābhavana in the Svargāśrama as well as the Visnu temple of Paramārthaniketana are lovely places for the visitors

Amritsar—There are a number of temples in this city The temples of *Satyanārāyana and Śrī* Laksmīnārāyana are particularly very beautiful

Kurukṣetra—The Yajurveda refers to Kuruksetra as the place of sacrifice performed by Visnu and other gods The well-known battle of Kaurvas and Pāṇdavas described in the Mahābhārata was fought at this very place In this battle Lord Krsna had preached the valiant Arjuna the philosophy of the Gītā and had manifested before him His four-armed Visnu-form

There are two lakes here known by the names the Brahmasara and the samnihitasara In the middle of the Brahmasara an old temple of Bhagavān Visnu accompanied with Garuda stands on a platform surrounded by water An old and very attractive temple of Śrī Laksmī nārāyana may be seen near the western bank of the Samnihitasara

Vārāhatīrtha—Vārāhatirtha is situated near Panipata a few miles away from Jind, where Bhagavān Visnu had manifested Himself as Varāha or Boar and had lifted up the earth The visitors bathe and worship Bhagavān Visnu here

Garhamuktesvara—In this region of the Śaivas near Meerut, there is also a temple of Bhagavān Laksmīnārāyana

Mathurā-Vṛndāvana—The old name of Mathurā is Madhurā or Madhuvana The celebrated child devotee Dhruva had undertaken penances and had succeeded in seeing Bhagavān Visnu at this place Bhagavān Visnu had appeared here in His incarnation as Śrī Krsna

Vrndāvana and Mathurā are fortunate to have been the places

of the Bhagavān Śrī Krsṇa's plays in His childhood and young age There was the temple of Śrī Keśavadeva at the place of Śrī Krsna's birth or manifestation got built by Vajranābha Auranghazib got this temple demolished and had a mosque erected at its place The mosque stands there even today, but quite adjacent to this mosque a new place of worship has been established on Krsna *cabutarā* (i e Platform) built by Śrī Krsna Janmabhūmi Sevā Trust The new Keśavadeva temple has been built in front of this Krsna *cabūtarā* The Dvārakādhīśa temple of Mathura is also worth seeing

Just as the temple of Śrī Krsṇa's birth-place was got demolished by Auranghzib the temple of Govindadevajī at Vrndāvana was also demolished at his behest It was an act which speaks of his religious fanaticism One storey of Govindadeva temple is standing even today and its architecture betrays the fact that it was one of the most important temples of northern India At Vrndāvana the Madanamohana temple, Gopinātha temple, Radhāvallabha temple, the Jugal Kiśora temple, the Rādhāgopāla temple of Gwalior, Sāhajī temple, Bānkebiharī temple, Sevākuñja, Nidhivana, Vamśīvata, Śrī Rangajī temple are worth seeing The temple of Śrī Rangajī is erected inside spacious boundary-walls on the style of the temples of the southern India It has a uniqueness of its own

Besides Mathurā and Vrndāvana there are other places and temples in Braja regions which may be visited and seen They are Gokula, Mahāvana, Syāmalalā temple, Chathīpalanā, Mathurānātha temple Govardhana, Mānasī Gangā, Harideva temple, Lādilījī temple at Barasānā, Jaipur temple, Sānkarīkhora, Morakutī, Nandagaon etc ,

Prayāga—According to the 'Prayāga-Śatādhyāyī' the Vaisnava seat of Ādi Venīmādhava should be situated on the right side of Aksayavata But now this place is supposed to be in water at the Trivenī Sangama At Prayag on the whole twelve Mādhavas have been referred to They are 1 Śankhamādhava (on the side of Jhūnsī, in the grove of Munśī near Chatanagā), 2 Cakramādhava (in Arail), 3 Gadāmādhava (this image is installed in a temple at Naini), 4 Padmamādhava (in Bīkara Devariyā, there is only

a stone-slab to indicate the place), 5 Anantamādhava (Near Aksayavata), 6 Bindumādhava (The image is no where, the place, however, is near Draupadīghāta), 7. Manohara-mādhava (the image is in Draveśvaranātha temple, 8 Asi-mādhava (ought to be near Nāgavāsuki); 9 Sankastahara-mādhava (in Jhūnsī behind Hamsatīrtha and below the Sandhyāvata), 10. Ādi Veṇīmādhava (at Triveni in the form of water), 11 Ādi Mādhava (in Araila), 12. Śrī Veṇīmādhava (at Daraganja) In the Vaisnavāśrama at Daraganj the temple of Śrī Veṅkateśa is also worth seeing

Kāśī—It is the Śaiva region Nevertheless, there are many Visnu temples in Kāśī There is the Visnu-pādodaka-tīrtha at the confluence of Gangā and Varunā At the top of the flights of steps of the Ghāta there is an old temple of Visṇu known as 'Ādikeśava' The image in this temple is of black colour, four armed and in standing posture Srī Laksmīnārāyana temple at Rajaghata, Naranārāyana temple at Mehtaghata the Laksmīnārāyna temple at Bhonsalaghata, the Laksmīnārāyana temple and Vārāhi temple at Manamandira ghata and the Hayagrīva-kuṇda and the Hayagrīva temple at Shivalaghata are all beautiful There are the Visṇu Kāśitīrtha, and Bindutīrtha at Pañchagangāghata, Auranghazib had demolished the old Bindumādhava temple and had got a mosque erected at its place Behind this temple there are the temples of Dvarakādhīśa and Rādhākrsna We can see an attractive image of Laksmīnārayana in the Annapūrnā temple also

Ayodhyā—According to the Skandapurāṇa Ayodhyā is situated on the *cakra* of Bhagavān Visṇu Giving the etymology of the word 'Ayodhyā' the Skandapurāna holds that the syllable 'a' signifies Brahmā, the letter 'ya' is for Visṇu and 'dha' represents Rudra Thus Ayodhya combines together the forms of all these three-Brahmā, Visṇu and Śankara.

Bhagavān Visṇu had manifested Himself in the incarnation as Rāma at this place and had established the rule of righteousness There was an old temple at the place where Śrī Visṇu had appeared in the form of Rāma Babar had got this temple demolished and

had a mosque built at its place But at the present the image of Rāma is very well there In the campus of that old temple there is also another small temple of Śrī Rāma's birthplace.

There are a number of sacred places (tīrthas), numerous temples and many Āśramas of the saints which all should be seen At the place where Bhagavān Śrī Rāma had entered into the effulgence of Viṣṇu along with all the people living in Ayodhya, there is the Gopratāra tīrtha (Guptaraghata) on the bank of sacred Sarayū It is to the west of Ayodhya

According to the Skandapurāna and Rudrayāmala Bhagavān Visnu had at different times seven incarnations at Ayodhya In the memory of these seven incarnations the following seven regions known by the following names here 1. Candrahari, 2 Guptahari, 3 Cakrahari, 4. Viṣṇuhari, 5. Dharmahari, 6 Bilvahari and 7 Punyahari

Gorakhpur—The Viṣṇu temple at this place is well known. There is a pond behind this temple. The beautiful image of this temple was found accidently when some one was engaged in digging earth on the south side of this pond Built of black touchstone this image is unique from the point of view of sculpture. Every limb of this image is well-shaped and proportionate. It is difficult to determine how old this image is Some maintain that it is about one and half thousand to two thousnad years old Attracted with the art and beauty of this image the British Government had taken it away for displaying in museum, but the Hindus protested vehemently and succeeded in getting it back This image was then installed in the temple The temple is a place of attraction for the people visiting Gorakhpur. There is another unique feature of this temple which is hard to find elsewhere. Four adorable deities of the four chief Tīrthas have been installed in the four corners of this temple Bhagavān Badarīviśāla of Badarīnāthpurī situated in the northern part of the North India; Bhagavān Kṛṣna-Baladeva- Subhadrā of the Jagannāthapurī situated in the eastern part, Bhavavān Śiva of Rameśvara temple of south and Bhagavān Kṛṣna of Dvārakāpurī of the Western part—all these four venerable deities are occupying the four corners of this temple and a parikramā of the

temple means the accomplishement of a Parikramā of the four adorable s[illegible]s of the deities belonging to four principal centres of religious sanctity (dhāmas)

Hariharakṣetra—There is the temple of Śrī Hariharanātha on the bank of a rivulet known as Mahī The image in this temple bears the combined form of Harihara. Every year on the full-moon day (Pūrnimā) of the month of Kārttika a huge fair is held here The Māhātmya of this place tells that the elephant (Gajarāja) was rescued from Grāha (i e the crocodile) by Bhagavān Viṣnu at this very place

Būrhā Nīlakaṇṭha—This place is seven miles away from Kathamandu There are many temples and sacred places of Bhagavān Visnu in Nepal The image of this place, however, has special importance Bhagavān 'Jalaśāyī Nārāyana' may be seen in sleeping posture on the serpent-bed in the water of the lake in Śatarudra mountain The eleven hoods rising over the image, which possesses four arms as well as weapons in them, enhance the magnificence of Jalaśāyī Nārāyaṇa In the past the image was buried in earth once or twice due to land-slip, but each time after being directed in dreams the king of Nepal had brought the image into light having got the heap of soil removed The pilgrims going to worship Bhagavān Paśupatinātha usually go to Būrhā Nīlakantha also This temple is highly esteemed in Nepal

Caṅgunārāyaṇa—This temple is at a distance of about 10 miles from Kathamandu and is situated on the top of a hill The main gate of the temple is very attractive The famous French writer Sylvan Levi has much appreciated this temple and has declared it to be the best among the temples of Nepal Śankha and Cakra have been built on two stone mounts on both the sides of the gate

Nārāyaṅa-catuṣṭaya—In the vicinity of Cangunārāyana there are three villages named Viśankunārāyana, Śikharanārāyana and Ecangunārāyana and in these villages are situated the temples of Bhagavān Narāyaṇa known by those very names Paying homage in all these four temples in only one day is held to be extremely efficacious A visit to these four temples is altogether a journey of 22 miles Men filled with religious faith visit the four Nārāyaṇa

temples in one day facing even a lot of inconvenience

Gayā—In India the foremost sacred place associated with the manes is Gayā Visnupada is indeed the chief temple here This magnificent temple is situated on the bank of the river Phalgu In the temple the mark of Visnu's footstep may be seen on an eight cornered altar There is an assembly-hall outside the temple and two spacious halls have been built for the visitors to enable them to perform Śrāddha rites Nearby is a temple with the image of Garuda and to the north of this is the temple of Jagannātha. A rest-house for the pilgrims (Dharmaśālā) is also situated near the temple In another temple there is the image of Bhagavān Laksmīnārāyana At a distance of a few yards towards the north-east side from the Visnupada temple and on the bank of river Phalgu we may see the Gadādhara temple which has the four-armed image of Bhagavān Gadādhara

Calcutta—This is a metropolitan city of India Śrī Vaikunthanātha temple situated in the Barabazar is very magnificent It is fascinating to see the four-armed Bhagavān Vaikunthanātha accompanied with the goddess Śrī and Bhū One or another programme of the songs in the praise of Bhagavān, religious discourses or performances of worship or functions goes on here The management of worship, offering of Bhoga and Āratī is very impressive

Bhuvaneśvāra—Śrī Lingarāja temple is the main temple at Bhuvaneśvara, the capital of Orissa Bhuvaneśvara, is the name of this Lingarāja This temple is situated inside elevated boundary walls, the architecture of this temple is of very high order Exceedingly charming beauty of art may be seen in the outer portion of the temple The interior too is no less fascinating

In the temple of Lingarāja the image is flat and unfinished Since it is of the shape of a disc it may be regarded as the combined image of Harihara and in fact the worship is done with the Harihara mantra accepting the image as such The image being in the form of Harihara, Pināka (the bow) and not Triśūla is accepted as its main weapon bhoga or offering of cooked meals is offered to Śrīlingarāja, with Harihara mantra There are a

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THE KALYANA-KALPATARU

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